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NOVEMBER 18, 1996

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CORRESPONDENCE

Foreign contributors

To the editors:

I would like to correct a couple of errors in Robert Kagan's "After the Deluge, and Before" (October 21). First, Violeta Chamorro was not the first Nicaraguan president who both won her election fairly and "who transferred power peacefully to an opposition party after a second free election." Her precursor, Daniel Ortega, won the free elections of 1984 and then democratically turned over power to Chamorro after his term expired. This is not to imply that those elections were free of tampering. The government of the United States filtered millions of dollars into the country, funneling large sums into the opposition newspaper, *La Prensa*—as Kagan admits—and directly into the campaign—as he also concedes—buying out many candidates. The price for such money was to withdraw from the elections, thereby delegitimizing them. This then makes it impossible to consider the United States as "the most important outside guarantor of the democratic rules of the game."

Besides not objectively looking at the elections of 1984, it is also hard to understand that the Sandinista army could be—as Kagan proposes—an "instrument" of the country's "oppression." Does Kagan think it oppressive to liberate Nicaragua from three decades of U.S.-supported dictatorship? Does he think that the army, supporting *doña* Violeta in the face of U.S. pressure to step down after her election, is oppressive?

THOMAS WARD
Baltimore, Maryland

The big if

To the editors:

In his October 21 "Winning Ugly," Matthew Miller informs us that "... labeling the GOP's 40 percent increase over seven years a 'cut' has a truly corrupting effect on public understanding...." Since the purpose of his argument is to thunder against demagoguery on Medicare, it would be useful to look at some figures to see if he is guilty of the same sin.

The GOP's proposed 40 percent increase of Medicare in seven years represents an annual growth of about 7 percent. This has also been the growth of medical care prices in the consumer price index in the last decade. If these price increases are not slowed, the GOP's plan would mean that, in real terms, Medicare payments would remain the same. Since the population over 65 is projected to grow about 1 percent a year, the GOP's plan actually represents a real decrease per Medicare patient. Only if medical cost increases are substantially slowed would the GOP plan result in a significant increase in real terms per Medicare patient. Of course, this is a big "if."

Miller is right that we should cut the growth of Medicare payments. But before he lectures us again about the alleged iniquities of the Democratic Party, he should take some time out and learn the difference between real and nominal variables.

FREDERIC L. PRYOR
Swarthmore, Pennsylvania

Matthew Miller replies:

On Mr. Pryor's premise, we'd assume medical inflation in the next seven years will be what it's always been, and view anything less as a real "cut." But it's not a "big if" to assume a lower inflation trajectory, when private sector payors are achieving price *rollbacks* for services in many areas across the country. Whatever the pros and cons of managed care, there's little doubt that downward price pressure on medical providers is here to stay. And whatever term we want to use, Democrats have proposed the same

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amount of Medicare savings that Republicans are calling for, and will again before long.

The wasteland

To the editors:

In her November 4 letter responding to an article about opposition to the founding of an all-girls public school in East Harlem, Veronica MacPhee asserts that NOW and the ACLU should not challenge the existence of such schools when "they allow to remain unchallenged the inequity ... of a dual public school system that enables white upper-class children to thrive in taxpayer-funded suburban schools," while minority children are relegated to "the inner-city wastelands that pass for public schools."

Apparently, Ms. MacPhee is unaware of the American Civil Liberties Union's significant body of work in the area of educational equity.

In *Sheff* v. *O'Neill*, the ACLU (along with other major civil rights organizations) argued that the racially segregated Hartford public school system deprived minority schoolchildren of their fundamental right to an adequate education under the state constitution. The Connecticut Supreme Court agreed, and in an historic decision handed down in July ordered the state to remedy the problem.

The ACLU has also filed legal challenges to the inadequacy of public education in Baltimore, Maryland, Alabama and Louisiana. In both the Alabama and Baltimore cases, the courts have already agreed with the ACLU's charge that the public schools are constitutionally inadequate. The Louisiana case is scheduled for trial early next year. In addition, the ACLU and the New York Civil Liberties Union have jointly filed an amicus brief in support of similar challenges brought on behalf of New York City schoolchildren.

Whatever one thinks about the constitutionality of the East Harlem school, it seems perfectly clear that establishing a publicly funded single-sex school for fifty girls in New York, a city of 1 million students, diverts attention from the real problems that exist in the "inner-city wastelands that pass for schools"—schools attended, for better or worse, by boys and girls alike.

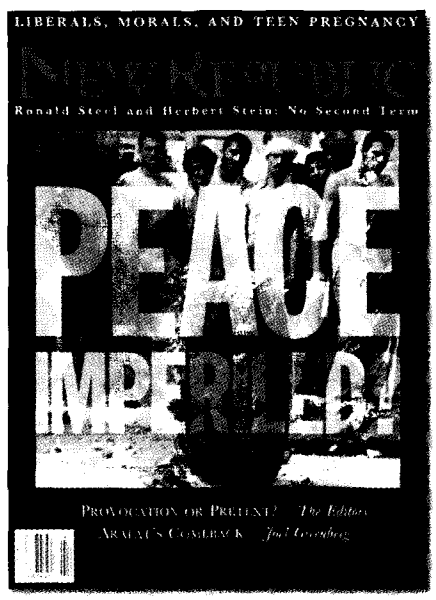
STEVEN R. SHAPIRO
American Civil Liberties Union
New York, New York

Match point

To the editors:

You published Jacob Heilbrunn's frothy (if not frothing) account of my lunchtime talk to a small private audience in Washington ("Out to Lunch," October 21). He takes issue with Professor Gordon Craig's statement that dissident historians like myself play a key role in new scholarship, whose views "we dare not disregard." In the same article Heilbrunn admits that a few years ago the English scholar John Charmley created a stir when he argued in *Churchill—The End of Glory* that Churchill was a bumbler who destroyed the British Empire by refusing to accept Hitler's well-meant peace offer in 1940. Charmley does not deny that his book, published early in 1993, was inspired by my own seminal work, *Churchill's War*, first published in Australia in 1987. Game and set to Irving, I believe, if not yet match as well.

DAVID IRVING
London, England



Bedfellows

To the editors:

Ronald Steel writes in "Bad Terms" (October 21), "The purpose of an election is to express a choice. This presumes ... that the voter feels strongly enough about the choice to participate."

Sounds reasonable. But it isn't true. The purpose of an election is to express a choice, period.

Let's say I like the NEA, and I want them to receive a $100 million appropriation. But say there are only two choices on the ballot—(a) give them $50 million or (b) give them $51 million. I'll grumble, but I'm still going to vote for (b).

Steel may feel that the marginal value of Bill Clinton is insufficiently higher than that of Bob Dole to get him out of bed on Election Day (but *is* high enough to get him to take a few minutes to write, "Would I prefer Bill Clinton in the White House to Bob Dole? Yes"). But that does not nullify the purpose of the election. It just means that Ronald Steel doesn't feel like voting if he doesn't feel strongly enough.

ANDY AARON
Ardsley, New York

Blow a hole

To the editors:

I read Herbert Stein's praise of Bob Dole with increasing amusement and incredulity ("Dole Man," October 21). In particular, the sentence that really stopped me—and almost caused me not to continue reading the rest of the article—was the following: "No one can be sure how a President Dole would deal with the budget problem, but he has a long record of deep concern over it, as something to act upon and not only to talk about when people are listening."

Is Stein tuned to the wrong history channel? In the 1980 election campaign, candidate Ronald Reagan said to President Jimmy Carter, "If you can't balance the budget, move over and let me do it." The American people gratefully elected Reagan. There followed twelve years of the worst budget deficits in American history. The smallest budget deficits during the Reagan and Bush years were bigger than the biggest deficit during the Carter years. While Presidents Reagan and Bush were busy quadrupling in twelve years the total national debt that had been accumulated over the 200 years before them, where was Bob Dole? He was by turns Senate Majority Leader and Senate Minority Leader, vigorously pushing the fantastic budget advanced by his presidents.

During the Clinton years, the budget deficit has been reduced every year—this year, it is down 60 percent from the $290 billion of Bush's last year. And where was Bob Dole during those years? He was, again, Senate Minority Leader and Senate Majority Leader, vigorously opposing President Clinton's successful efforts to bring down the deficit. As President Clinton has pointed out, the budget would be in surplus now if we didn't have to pay interest on the debt accumulated by Reagan and Bush—and Dole.

JOSEF G. SOLOMON
Saratoga Springs, New York

To the editors:

So, lifelong Republican and Nixon/Ford flack Herbert Stein is gonna vote for Bob Dole, huh? Fascinating. Got any other "dog-bites-man" stories you'd like to invest a page in for your next issue?

DAVID SHLAPAK
Via the Internet

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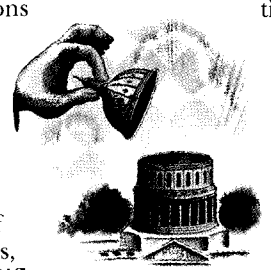
FROM WASHINGTON

K será

"We'll have a Democratic Congress controlled by labor bosses," Representative Bill Martini warned followers at a rally in West Orange, New Jersey. Martini's complaint is standard among Republicans, but it only tells half the story. The AFL-CIO's campaign this year was largely reactive—prompted by a new, and highly effective, coalition of conservative interests. Activists, think tanks, business organizations, lobbyists and politicians joined together to kill the Clinton administration's legislative initiatives in 1994; they contributed to the Republican congressional victory that November, and drove the GOP's agenda in 1995. Republicans fret about labor's power, but in its wildest dreams the AFL-CIO couldn't wield as much influence under a Democratic majority as this coalition would in a GOP-run Congress.

The coalition's story begins at the end of Clinton's first year in office. For most of that year, Republicans were in disarray. Some wanted to block every administration initiative; some sought compromise. Even a longtime Republican ally like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce was working with the administration to develop its health care bill. But in January 1994, a group of conservatives, emboldened by revelations about Whitewater and other administration scandals, took the offensive against the administration.



Grover Norquist, the president of Americans for Tax Reform, brought together representatives of conservative organizations, including the National Rifle Association (NRA) and the Christian Coalition, every Wednesday at his Dupont Circle office. Working closely with Newt Gingrich, John Boehner and the House Republican leadership, they plotted the defeat of Clinton's health care bill. The business lobby Citizens for a Sound Economy organized a parallel group of business organizations that met regularly on Capitol Hill with Georgia Senator Paul Coverdell. Both groups enjoyed the cooperation not only of the Republican National Committee, but also of the conservative media. Rush Limbaugh's Washington representative often turned up at Wednesday Group get togethers. Norquist himself was *The American Spectator*'s political columnist and had close ties to *The Wall Street Journal* editorial page.

The groups began by pressuring the Chamber of Commerce to repudiate the Clinton plan. That spring, Chamber Senior Vice President William Archey, who had nurtured the organization's ties to the administration, was forced to resign. He was replaced by GOP loyalist Bruce Josten, who brought the chamber into the new anti-Clinton coalition. After helping defeat the health care plan, coalition members and their allies in Congress worked to stall the administration's crime bill and to block a measure requiring lobbying disclosure. In November, they contributed campaign workers, brochures, ads and money to the Republican effort to take the House. The National Federation of Independent Business established a PAC that gave $700,000 exclusively to Republican candidates.

After the Republicans took Congress, Norquist, Boehner, Coverdell, Josten and Paul Beckner of Citizens for a Sound Economy organized yet another day-of-the-week club—the Thursday Group—to plot Republican legislative strategy. Composed of lobbyists from businesses and trade associations and representatives from the Christian Coalition, the NRA and other conservative groups, it helped develop and then win support for the major Republican initiatives of 1995: the balanced budget proposal (including its reduction in projected Medicare spending), the tax-cut plan and the bills slashing environmental regulation. (The business lobbyists' anti-regulation "Project Relief" was a subcommittee of the Thursday Group.) In the heady first days of the Gingrich Congress, the Thursday Group functioned as the Revolution's boosters and its board of directors.

Soon after the '94 election, members of the Thursday Group began contributing to Republican candidates and to the Republican National Committee, which funneled some of the money back to coalition organizations, including $2 million to Norquist's Americans for Tax Reform. This spring, when the AFL-CIO's Project '96, aimed at restoring a Democratic Congress, began to enjoy surprising success, members of the Thursday Group plotted a counterattack. Josten,

continued on page 45

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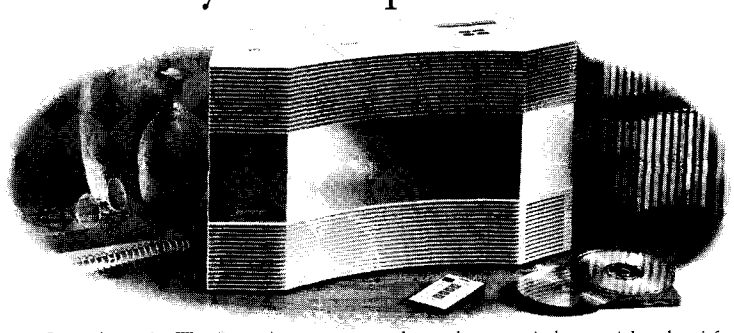

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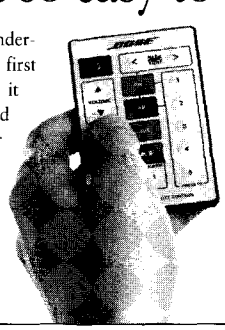

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

NOVEMBER 18, 1996

STUFFED BALLOTS

President Clinton is talking about school uniforms. Bob Dole is talking about Mahatma Gandhi. Congressional hopefuls are fighting over who's "extremely liberal" and who's "astoundingly liberal." If you're looking for real ideas, ignore them all. Out West, voters are considering ballot initiatives that, for good or ill, constitute the real substance of the campaign:

Health care. Since the president's disastrous health care plan, reformers have backed off. California, a state exploding with managed care plans, has picked up the slack. Unregulated HMOs have proved a mixed blessing. They eliminate fee-for-service incentives for doctors to overprescribe expensive treatments, but they build in other perverse incentives to withhold needed care. The horror stories of children not being given vital tests are piling up, and there have already been a few deaths. In California, the backlash has begun.

Propositions 214 and 216, competing measures sponsored by quarreling unions, attempt to smooth the rough edges off the health care market. Both ban HMOs from giving doctors financial incentives to withhold care; end insidious "gag orders" that prevent doctors from recommending treatment their HMO won't cover; and establish strict guidelines which specify when patients can be denied treatments they request. These are exactly the sorts of protections consumers need. Both propositions recognize this, but 216, unlike its rival, imposes punitive taxes beyond those necessary to provide them.

Stockholder lawsuits. California voters will also consider Proposition 211, which makes it easier for stockholders to sue corporations. The idea sounds pleasingly majoritarian, but in fact Proposition 211 is designed for the benefit of a tiny few—a breed of parasite that specializes in purchasing a share of stock in new high-technology industries and suing the board of directors if the stock drops. High-tech industries are vulnerable because they offer high potential profits but also big risks. A lawyer associated with the parasite then files a class action suit, often frivolous, with the intention of settling. Proposition 211 endangers crucial high-growth Silicon Valley industries, which drive the country's technological innovation. And its proponents seem to have no argument beyond reflexive hatred of business. So far nobody to the right of Ralph Nader has taken the bait. Even Clinton, an ally of the trial lawyers, opposes 211.

Parental rights. In Colorado Christian conservative activists are continuing their biannual tradition of tormenting the state's voters with risible "pro-family" initiatives. This year they may have hit on a winning formula that, if fruitful, promises to multiply. The strategy is to pass an innocuously worded measure with potentially radical consequences. Colorado's Amendment 17 adds to the state constitution's list of inalienable rights that "of parents to direct and control the upbringing, education, values and discipline of their children." It seems like a nice June Cleaver idea. Until you think of all the varieties of parent out there. What about child abusers? Or parents who decide to take their children out of school and send them to work? Christians (and others) already have the right to school their children at home, as long as they comply with minimal government standards. To eliminate state oversight would be foolish.

Civil rights. The California Civil Rights Initiative's Republican allies have had difficulty masking their cynicism. ("They're important issues," says Bob Dole. "They're wedge issues.") But its opponents have acquitted themselves with even less dignity. Moderates like Clinton have dodged the question, and liberals have resorted to tired hysteria about racism and sexism (see "Absolute California," by Glenn Loury, page 17).

Opponents worry that CCRI, which calls for race-neutral policies, will leave California's best universities nearly all white (and Asian). And that may be true. But while diversity is a worthwhile pursuit, it is not, as affirmative action's practitioners implicitly assert, one worth sacrificing fairness and honesty for. Minority students will not lose the chance to attend college as the result of this proposition, more will simply attend colleges commensurate with their high-school performance. And we have little doubt that, in a relatively short period of time, substantial numbers of black and Hispanic students will return to Berkeley and UCLA—this time without special favors.

Perhaps most importantly, CCRI has wrested affirmative action from bureaucracies and courtrooms and returned it to the democratic process. This is a heartening trend in and of itself. May it multiply. •

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NOTEBOOK

OF THAT TIME, OF THAT PLACE: "Uncompromising," said *The New York Times* obituary about Diana Trilling, who died last week. Well, yes; but the important point, the reason that Mrs. Trilling acquired a kind of pastoral authority in her community of intellectuals, was that she was uncompromising about a view of the world that was not simple. In this respect, she differed from many other uncompromising intellectuals. (It was an uncompromising time, but great things really were at stake.) Mrs. Trilling never confused the realms. Politics was to stay out of culture and culture was to stay out of politics; and when a politician or a writer brought them close, when a novel tried to smuggle Stalinism into art or a protest movement tricked its ideology out in the prestige of the imagination, Mrs. Trilling pounced. (To devastating effect, as *Claremont Essays* and *We Must March My Darlings* and *Reviewing the Forties* showed.) But the complexity that she embodied in her person and her work did not stop at the distinction between politics and culture. Within politics, too, Mrs. Trilling was the sworn enemy of totalism. It is hard to remember the days when the words "cold war liberal" were a badge of honor, but once upon a time they denoted the repudiation of cheap consistency and heartless abstraction, the spirited readiness to fight Stalinism and McCarthyism, Soviet expansionism and American racism, *at the same time*. In hindsight, the intellectual wars in which Mrs. Trilling was fiercely a soldier may seem parochial and pretentious, as if a book review could make a difference to history; but the anti-Stalinist intellectuals of New York did change the climate in which politics and the philosophy of politics was treated, and not only in New York. They made American life more honorable and more honest. Yet Mrs. Trilling was not only fierce and not only a soldier. She was a woman of sensibility, a patient angel of the private life, who could sit with a student or a friend for hours and try to make sense of the darker sides. (She had a weakness for the turpitude of the prosperous, and her writing about Jean Harris and O.J. Simpson owed as much to D.H. Lawrence as the other writing about Jean Harris and O.J. Simpson owed to television.) Like Mr. Trilling, Mrs. Trilling believed in the kind of reason that kept an eye on unreason. And like him, she showed that reason could regard unreason "strenuously" and "exigently" (those were the rallying cries of Claremont Avenue) and put it in its place. We will miss her strictness inside our pages and we will miss it outside our pages. There is less probity in America now.

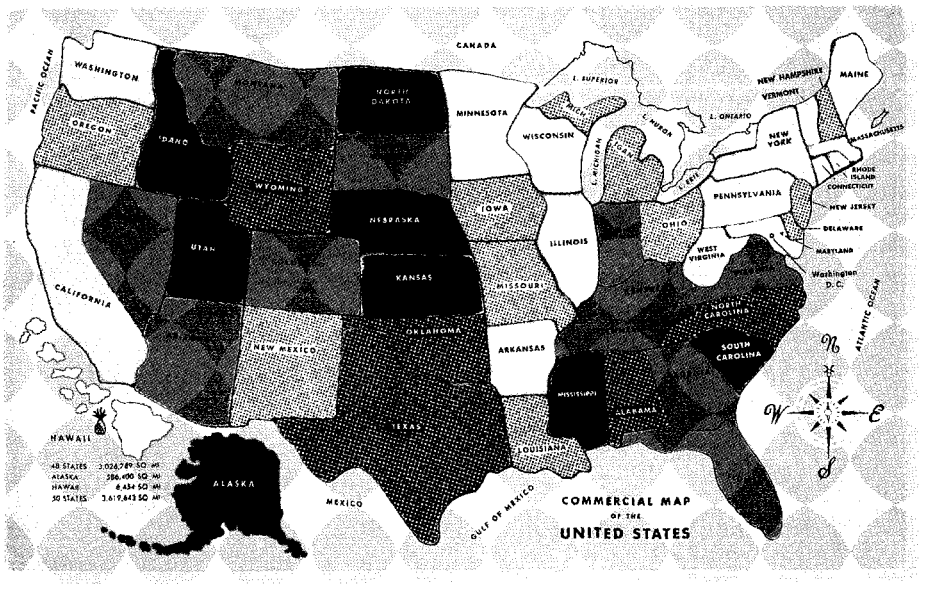
Weekly Electoral Vote Estimate

As of 10/25/96

by Hal Bruno, ABC News Political Director

(538 Total Votes, 270 Required for Election)

Clinton=323 Even=108 Dole=107



Clinton Strong

Clinton Ahead

Close/Even

Dole Strong

Dole Ahead

Weekly estimates are not scientific, but the result of a compilation of interviews and local polling.

Map modified for TNR by Jane Holloway

LIGHTS OUT: For Bob Dole, our final electoral map offers good news and bad. The good news is that a last-minute return to the fold in a couple of Southern and Western states—notably Tennessee and Colorado—means Dole will probably avoid a Goldwatery grave, and may even equal George Bush's eighteen-state total against Clinton in 1992. The bad news is that he's going to lose big anyway. California, a state Dole needs desperately, remains in the "Clinton strong" column. When he began his California offensive three weeks ago, Dole aides admitted that theirs was a shoot-the-moon strategy—lunging for the Golden State's fifty-four electoral votes would leave them vulnerable elsewhere, perhaps even in traditional Republican strongholds. Indeed, as the race winds down, it looks as though Clinton may carry as many as seven Southern states, and possibly even Arizona, where voters haven't gone Democratic since 1948. Put it this way: it won't be a late Tuesday night. •

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Can cumulative voting ease racial tensions?

ALL FOR ONE

By Samuel Issacharoff and Richard H. Pildes

The decade-old federal policy of clustering blacks and whites into racially designed districts has this fall come under unprecedented attack. Forced by new court decisions to run in majority-white districts, several black candidates across the South face the prospect of losing their seats. But as this bitter public spectacle plays itself out, the South is also experimenting with another, less public solution to the problem of deep-seated racial and political division. And this one actually seems to be working.

Chilton County, Alabama, the self-proclaimed "Peach Capital of the World," is poor even by Alabama standards. Its black residents, 11 percent of the population dispersed in isolated pockets, are poorest of all. In 1988, a federal court found that the county's blacks had been excluded from local office. The standard solution—minority districts—was unworkable because the county's pockets of African Americans are so geographically dispersed. After much agonizing, white political leaders reluctantly tried something different: cumulative voting. Chilton County's two most important political bodies, the County Commission and the Board of Education, were each expanded to seven members. Every voter was allowed seven votes. He could cast one for each of seven candidates, plump all seven down on one, or choose any option in between.

At first, the shift perplexed many people, including the candidates. Only Bobby Agee, a thoughtful black aspirant for the County Commission, immediately grasped the concept and openly asked voters for all seven of their votes. Most of his opponents seemed to believe that, as the editor of the local paper put it, asking for more than one vote per person was "not the Southern gentleman thing to do."

The results were dramatic: a long-serving white member of the Board of Education lost. Agee won more votes than any other candidate, even though only 1.5 percent of whites cast even a single vote for him. For the first time since Reconstruction, blacks won seats on the County Commission and the Board of Education. There were also unexpected side effects. Other "minorities" started winning. Republicans, scarce in Chilton County local politics, got elected, and, for the first time, a woman won a seat on the Board of Education. (This parallels a larger pattern: countries with proportional or semi-proportional representation systems average 15 percent women in their parliaments, while democracies with single-member election districts, such as the United States, average less than 6 percent.)

Bobby Agee embodies the hopes that cumulative voting schemes raise. In 1988, he owed his election to black voters. In fact, he was the only candidate to campaign in black areas. In a winner-take-all system, like those used to elect most local governments, he would have been wiped out. When he first took office, he acknowledged, his fellow commissioners considered him "the black representative." Yet, once in office, Agee branched out. A white colleague admitted that Agee proved to be the commission's most educated and talented member.

The 1992 election, the second under cumulative voting, looked quite different. Many white candidates changed their campaign strategies. Realizing that whites would split their votes among white candidates, they turned to blacks as a potential swing constituency. Blacks would vote for Agee, they reasoned, but perhaps they might cast a vote or two for them as well.

White candidates weren't the only ones to shift their strategy. Agee took on a new role as well. He was reelected, and his fellow commissioners elected him chair. And his election proved an important axiom about the new system. Some white voters had clearly become comfortable with his presence on the commission. Far from causing a white backlash, proportional representation appears to have eased racial division. Agee won twice as many white votes in 1992 as in 1988, and he now gets more phone calls and requests from white constituents than from black ones. Agee's explanation of what has happened under the new voting system sounds almost quaint: people in Chilton County, he reports, are starting to "get away from race, creed and color" and are "looking at the ability of the person."

Proportional representation schemes will be getting the closer look they deserve elsewhere, as well. Last year local officials, desperate to avoid costly and divisive redistricting battles, convinced the Texas legislature to allow them to replace majority-rule school board elections with limited and cumulative voting schemes. In North Carolina, after the Supreme Court first invalidated the state's black-majority congressional districts, Republicans proposed dividing the state into three parts and electing congressional representatives by cumulative voting from within each area.

Such systems are no panacea. But, as it becomes even clearer that racial redistricting raises serious constitutional questions, many yearn for an alternative. When cumulative voting was first discussed several years ago, it seemed too radical to contemplate. But in Chilton County, Alabama, this novel strategy for transcending racial division doesn't look so radical after all.

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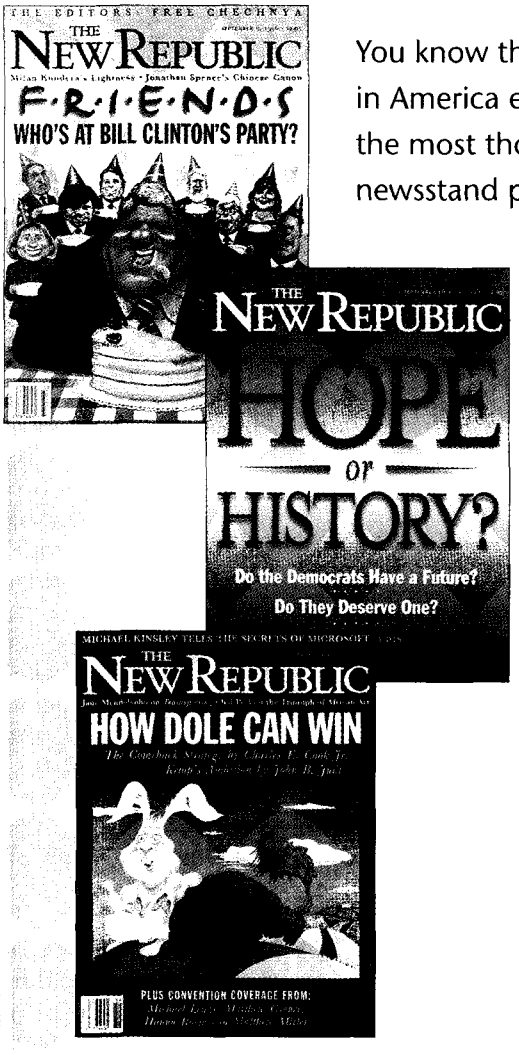

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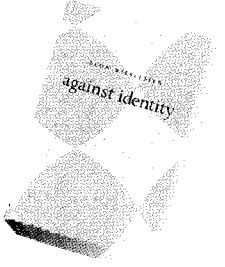

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Chirac's Middle East machinations.

GAULLING

By Jacob Heilbrunn

The French statesman Talleyrand's most famous diplomatic maxim was "*pas trop de zêle*"—avoid too much zeal. It is not a piece of advice that Jacques Chirac appears to have heeded during his trip in late October to the Middle East, where he engaged in an unseemly spat with his Israeli hosts in East Jerusalem, called for the creation of a Palestinian state and demanded that Israel withdraw from Lebanon and surrender the Golan Heights to Syria. Chirac's visit was supposed to revive the faltering peace process, but it backfired. The spectacle Chirac staged seems to have increased Yasir Arafat's intransigence, encouraging him to embark on a tour of European capitals rather than conclude an agreement on Hebron.

When the conservative Chirac finally won the French presidency on his third try in May 1995, his victory represented a break with the posturing of his socialist predecessor, François Mitterrand. Once in office, Chirac quickly took a number of overdue steps: officially acknowledging French complicity in deporting Jews during World War II; insisting on Western military action against the Serbs; and reintegrating France into NATO. Unfortunately, his latest maneuverings in the Middle East threaten to undo the reputation he was building for sound foreign policy.

Desperate to retrieve his sagging poll numbers at home—a bloated public service sector has defied all efforts at reform and unemployment remains over 12 percent—Chirac has resorted to bashing the United States and Israel. Chirac is not personally anti-American, but he has begun to see French and American interests as antithetical. In recent months, he has assailed America's role in Africa, its policies toward Iran, Iraq and Cuba, its control of the NATO command structure and its hostility toward United Nations General Secretary Boutros Boutros-Ghali. He has begun speaking of the *coparrainage*, or fostering, of the Middle East peace process by Europe (read: France). What he means is the (re)emergence of a uniquely French foreign policy—neo-Gaullism—that attempts to usurp American influence abroad.

Ever since Napoleon Bonaparte led his expeditionary army into Palestine in 1798 and called for the creation of a new Jewish nation, French foreign policy toward the Jews has veered between affection and hostility. France became the new state of Israel's main weapons supplier. But after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, as the French flirtation with the Third World began in earnest, Charles de Gaulle turned on Israel; in a press conference on November 27, 1967, he famously described the Jews as "an elite people, sure of itself and overbearing."

Chirac has continued in this political tradition. He is not the most egregious case—former Foreign Minister Michel Jobert, for example, made it a point of honor never to visit Israel—but he did ensure that France had close relations with Iraq from the late 1960s on. Thanks to Chirac's influence, France helped to build up the Iraqi army and construct the Baghdad airport. As prime minister under President Valery Giscard d'Estaing, Chirac met Saddam Hussein at Orly airport on September 5, 1975, and approved the uranium for Iraq's Osirak nuclear reactor before it was destroyed by an Israeli raid. Chirac's soft-line also extended to terrorists inside France. When a bomb went off on March 20, 1986, on the Champs-Élysée, Chirac, who was the designated prime minister, wanted to agree to the terrorists' demands only to be stymied by Mitterrand.

As president, Chirac first tried to inject France into the Middle East peace process in April 1996—dispatching Foreign Minister Herve de Charette to arrange a truce between Israel and Hezbollah. Though it was the U.S. that ended up arranging a ceasefire, Charette boasted that "eighty percent of the ideas" contained in the agreement were French. Chirac's latest plan for "*coparrainage*" is more ambitious. In Ramallah on October 23, he encouraged the Palestinians to stiffen their resolve: "The Palestinians are the victims of history, a people without a territory," he told the Palestinian legislative council. "You, too, have known the trials of an exodus and held up well. Stick to your principles." This rhetoric quickly infused Arafat and his followers with an illusory sense of power and importance. Ahmed Qurai, the president of the Palestinian legislative council, received a sustained ovation when he recalled de Gaulle's condemnation of the Jews. "History repeats itself today," he said, "with the courageous positions and integrity of President Chirac."

Chirac may have won "Vive Shirak!" signs in Ramallah, but his performance has not impressed France's European neighbors. Apart from its congenital inability to agree on a common foreign policy, so vividly demonstrated in the Bosnian crisis, the European Union (EU) has no particular desire to attack Israel. England and other members have been discomfited by Chirac's statements and are hostile to his dream of designating a special European envoy to the region, which they view as a French attempt to exploit the EU for its own designs. The most powerful member of the EU is Germany, and it, for obvious historical reasons, is not about to rebuke Israel publicly or privately. In the United States, Warren Christopher has condemned French meddling. And in France

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itself Chirac's visit did not have its intended effect: apart from the conservative *Le Figaro*, the press has cast a skeptical eye on his machinations.

As Chirac continues to flounder in the opinion polls, he will no doubt continue to strut about on the world stage; he's president, after all, until 2002. But the French president's antics are a sign of weakness, not strength. The Middle East does not need more lofty visions but, rather, increased pressure on the parties to conclude and fulfill agreements. Only the United States can accomplish that. •

RACE FOR THE SENATE: TEXAS

PICKUP ARTIST

By Carlos Hamann

In the closing days of his campaign, Democratic senatorial candidate Victor Morales has been reciting verses from a classic Mexican ballad called "*El Rey*" (The King): "*Con dinero o sin dinero, yo hago siempre lo que quiero*" (With money or without money, I do whatever I want). The song is so popular with Hispanic audiences that they often erupt in cheers before he finishes the next line: "*Porque sigo siendo el rey, y mi palabra es la ley*" (Because I'm still the king, and my word is the law). The lyrics nicely summarize the unconventional—and sometimes arrogant—campaign that Morales has been waging on pocket-change against the immensely wealthy Phil Gramm. Morales has based his whole strategy on personally meeting as many voters as possible, the pundits and polls be damned.

To run for the Senate, Morales, the grandson of Mexican immigrants, took a leave of absence from his job teaching high-school civics in the Dallas suburb of Mesquite. With $5,000 in personal savings, he launched his campaign by driving around Texas in his white Nissan pickup, collecting small contributions to fill up his gas tank and spending the night with sympathizers. "I'm not a professional politician—this is not my life," he'd tell them. "I don't have to lie, cheat or be a hypocrite to be elected."

From the beginning, Morales has played on his outsider status. He has refused to take money from political action committees. He has declined to schmooze with Democratic Party bigwigs, who in turn ignore him. And he's not big on political consultants. "He didn't hire us to give him advice," says Greg Weiner, Morales's 27-year-old campaign manager.

Despite his media image as a Texas Quixote waging a noble protest campaign, Morales is actually something of a savvy strategist. Before the primary campaign he carefully studied Texas election statistics, which convinced him that he could win the nomination by waging a simple, inexpensive campaign. In the 1994 Democratic primary for governor, a relative unknown named Gary Espinoza ran against the popular Ann Richards. By attracting Hispanic voters along with an anti-incumbent protest vote, Espinoza got 17 percent without even campaigning. "I can do that," Morales remembers thinking, "and I can do a much better job."

Morales sensed that the three Anglos vying to take on Gramm would squabble amongst themselves and ignore him. He was right. Then, when he forced an April 9 runoff with Congressman John Bryant, Morales banked on a high voter turnout in Hispanic areas such as El Paso and the Lower Rio Grande Valley. He was right again, and the Texas Democratic Party is still in shock.

As of mid-October the odometer on Morales's bug-splattered 1994 pickup read 102,836 miles. A good 72,000 of those miles had been logged on the campaign trail. But Texas is a big place—268,601 square miles to be exact, larger than Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin and Michigan combined. It has 254 counties, 27 media markets, and 10.5 million voters. In short, Texas has to be the worst state in the union to try the pickup truck strategy. Though lately Morales has been flying more often than he drives, his campaign is still run on personal contributions—80 percent of them under $100, according to Weiner—and cash collected in two-gallon plastic gas containers at rallies.

The Morales campaign headquarters is a storefront in a semi-abandoned mall outside Dallas. Inside, the cramped quarters look like a cross between the furniture section of a Salvation Army store and a college dorm room: the donated partitions don't match, the desks are all different sizes and shapes, and the computers are a mixed bag of Apple and IBM-compatibles belonging to the staff members. A hand-written note on the wall warns against overindulging in air-conditioning: "Do *not* set the thermostat any lower than 78 degrees!!! This is not a meat locker—we should not have $500 bills."

Unfortunately for Democrats, it's unlikely this homefried approach can topple the egregious Phil Gramm. Gramm's last two opponents, state Senators Hugh Parmer and Lloyd Doggett, were easily steamrolled by his pricey advertising machine, so in a way it makes sense to fight Gramm on unconventional grounds. But, in the end, a campaign like Morales's is probably just too small-time. "It's a good strategy if you're running for county commissioner," said Daniel Cavazos, editor of *The* (McAllen) *Monitor*, the largest newspaper in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. "It's a cute thing to drive around in a pickup truck, but it's another thing to try to defeat Phil Gramm." Morales has cut the incumbent's lead to eight points, according

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to one Democratic pollster, but it may soon widen. Gramm still has $1.4 million in the bank (this after blowing $28 million on his failed presidential bid), compared to Morales's $300,000. And Gramm has been flooding the Texas airwaves with ads that tout his ever-tougher-on-crime agenda and that link Morales to "Washington liberals." The charge isn't exactly accurate: Morales barely knows anyone in Washington, and he's not all that liberal, either. He's pro-choice, but his Perotist fervor on the deficit and campaign finance reform won him the Reform Party's endorsement. And he was at first coy about whether he even backed President Clinton's re-election. Still, Gramm clearly has enough cash to make the L-word stick.

Morales is hoping for a heavy turnout of Hispanic voters on November 5 and courting them as ardently as he can in the meantime. Though his Spanish isn't all that good, he gamely addresses Hispanic audiences in Tex-Mex Spanglish. If anything can make him a winner, it's his appeal to the state's 1.6 million Hispanic voters, who overwhelmingly support Democrats and who have been galvanized lately by political immigrant-bashing. The 400,000 or so new citizens who have registered to vote since the last general election (and who aren't included in polling data) may also help him.

If this upstart high-school teacher does unseat Gramm he'll be considered a political phenomenon. If not, he's already shown that an anti-politics-as-usual message combined with the fierce determination to spread it can scare the bejesus out of establishment politicians. The Democratic Party in Texas is probably already thinking hard about how to keep such outsider types from walking away with nominations in the future. "*Yo hago siempre lo que quiero*" indeed.

CARLOS HAMANN is an El Paso-based freelance reporter.

CONSUMED

ROCK OF AGES

By Paul O'Donnell

Jars of Clay breaks down like any other alternative rock band: a guy with a goatee, two sullen slackers and one waif. Released in January on Silvertone Records, their single "Flood" got good play on college radio stations, crossed over to the pop charts and climbed into the top 20. In September, Jars performed on Conan O'Brien's "Late Night." This fall, they opened for no less a rock icon than Sting, to standing ovations. And they are coming to a multiplex near you, on the soundtrack of the action flick *The Long Kiss Goodnight.*

But Jars of Clay isn't any other rock band: their name comes from 2 Corinthians 4:7: "We have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us." Only a year ago, the twentysomethings of Jars were known chiefly as one of the hottest acts in Christian rock. Though not a word on their album was changed, Jars' religion went nearly unmentioned as they successfully plunged into the mainstream.

Their crossover has been something of a miracle. Secular rock critics usually reserve for Christian bands a revulsion bordering on paranoia. Magazine editors refuse to take their publicity calls. Last February, when Christian-rappers-turned-grungers DC Talk came to Manhattan's trendy Mercury Lounge, Jon Pareles of *The New York Times* warned his readers that they were musical chameleons who "deployed" their changing styles to "proselytize for Christianity."

But, ironically, it's the secular record industry that is largely responsible for transforming Christian rock into a credible music genre. The Jars phenomenon has less to do with proselytizing than with good old-fashioned corporate marketing and capital.

Christian rock's modern era begins with the chirpy ingenue Amy Grant, a Nashville teenager who brought gospel music its first gold solo record in 1982. Cribbing from the folk-rock of Carole King and James Taylor, Grant gave her songs and her stage act a sexy pop bounce. Before, Christian music only charted when bumpkins like Tennessee Ernie Ford put out a gospel album. Then, young Christians were elated to have their own star. Grant sold more than 10 million records to Christians alone, before she crossed over with *Heart in Motion.* The album went platinum in 1991 and its single "Baby, Baby" hit number one on the pop charts.

Grant had little influence on mainstream music, but she had an enormous effect on its Christian cousin. Though church elders objected to her increasingly gauzy videos, and some fans felt betrayed as she dropped Jesus from her lyrics, Amymania liberated Christian songwriters. It showed them how faith music could draw from personal experiences, not just Bible verses. It also showed Christian musicians and record executives that there was a market for Christian equivalents of mainstream styles: sprouting up overnight after Amy's soft rock success were Christian white soul, Christian country and even Christian rap.

Just as it was being rebuilt politically by Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson, the conservative Christian community was reborn as a marketing demographic. Young Christians, who might consider, say, REM sacrilegious, eagerly gobbled up Jars of Clay. Secular companies began to smell money. By the mid-'90s, nearly every major recording company had established a presence in Christian music. Warner Brothers founded their own division, Warner Alliance. EMI snapped up the old gospel house Sparrow in 1992 as well as Forefront, the label of DC Talk, one of Christian rock's biggest acts.

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The Zomba Group purchased 15-year-old Brentwood Music in 1993. With Brentwood came Essential, Jars of Clay's label, and Essential became a sister company of Zomba's secular "boutique" label, Silvertone. So it was that the Jars of Clay CD landed on the desk of Michael Tedesco, director at Silvertone. "I absolutely thought 'Flood' was a great, great track," says Tedesco. "I thought they would compete, but also cut through the milieu of alternative rock." The fact that they were Christian was not a very big risk, since, like many post-Amy bands, Jars' lyrics are only obliquely religious. "Lift me up, I need you to hold me," goes the chorus of "Flood." "Lift me up. Keep me from drowning again." In what could pass as a tortured love song, Jesus is never mentioned.

Still, Tedesco took no chances. Silvertone refused to use one secular publicity firm that had recently handled an album for DC Talk, for fear of tipping off the press. "We were aware that [radio program directors] are adverse" to bands with a Christian message, says Tedesco. Missy Baker, a publicist at Forefront, puts it more forcefully: "As soon as they find out it's Christian, I hit a brick wall." (Baker keeps separate bio sheets on her groups, one for each side of the Christian wall.) "If the music's good, we just play it," said "Malibu" Sue McGann, a longtime deejay at WLIR, one of the nation's charter progressive stations in Long Island, when we talked in late summer. "We're not prejudiced against people because of where they come from." In fact, Malibu Sue didn't know that Jars were Christians until I informed her.

Yet, even when deejays found out they were Christian, Jars succeeded, because their music is good. In the decade since the big companies moved in, Christian music has made huge gains in quality. "It's a chain reaction," says Robert Beeson, who ran Essential. "More money means better production, which means better sound." The collaboration has produced some startling links: last year DC Talk shot a video with Simon Maxwell, who had directed one for postpunkers Nine Inch Nails, one of morals czar William Bennett's targets.

After signing with Jars, Michael Tedesco flew to Nashville to meet the band and ask whether any "devout religious practices" would prevent them from doing live performances. The answer was no, but Tedesco had hit on a sensitive issue. "Christians feel guilty if they don't say they're Christian," says Beeson. Core Christian fans may yet accuse Jars, as they still do Amy Grant, of selling out Jesus. "Some Christians take it as if they own these artists," says John Craigh, a 28-year-old Columbia graduate student and a committed Christian.

A test of whether this crossover can last begins this month, when Virgin Records releases "Between You and Me," a song by DC Talk. Here the stealth approach won't work, not only because DC Talk is better known than Jars, but because the album, also available on Virgin in the coming weeks, is called *Jesus Freak*. Unlike the brooding introspection of Jars, DC Talk openly taunts its secular listeners. "What will people say when they find out I'm a Jesus freak?" asks the title cut. We're about to find out.

PAUL O'DONNELL is a researcher at *Newsweek*.

Are the Kurds really that divided?

WRATH IN-KURD

By Nader Mousavizadeh

When Saddam Hussein decided in early September to reassert control over the Kurdish region of his country, thereby violating the U.N.-imposed "safe haven," the U.S. bombed in the south and shrugged in the north, citing a "civil war." General John Shalikashvili called the conflict "an internal matter between Kurds."

It is not. Massoud Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Jalal Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), the factions whose fighting gave Saddam an excuse to intervene, are less enemies than pawns, most recently of Iran and Iraq. Their conflict is not a "civil war" in any useful sense—and was defined as such only to provide an efficient excuse for the international community not to act.

To label what would be better described as a turf war between petty warlords a "civil war" is to vastly overstate its meaning to the Kurdish people. The largest ethnic minority in the world without a state, the Kurds exist on the fatal frontier of three states—Iran, Iraq and Turkey—whose lack of democratic rule is matched only by the virulence of their own nationalism. All three states, to varying degrees, have seen their ethnic diversity as the gravest threat to centralized rule, and the Kurds, in all three cases, have represented the most persistent challenge to that rule.

Yet this history of repression has only made the Kurds' sense of national identity stronger. Their bonds of ideology, language and ethnic roots—across and within national boundaries—are relatively weak. What holds them together is the lived experience of persecution as Kurds. Unlike in Iran, where the Kurdish movement is relatively muted, and in Turkey, where the conflict is characterized by almost equal brutality on the part of the PKK and the Turkish army, the history of Kurdish life in Iraq has always been more complicated. In the 1960s, governments in Baghdad granted constitutional recognition of the Kurdish minority only to rescind it without warning. Opposition became rigid under Saddam Hussein, and culminated in the 1988 gassings of Kurdish villages during the Iran-Iraq war and the mass exodus of over 1 million Kurds in the aftermath of the Gulf war. With the repatriation of Iraqi Kurds under Operation Provide Comfort, they were given their first internationally sanctioned right to self-rule since the 1920 Treaty of Sèvres. The two factions, Barzani's KDP and Talabani's PUK, came together to

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serve in the first government of national unity.

Though each leader has maintained his own militia, their differences were never reflected among the Kurdish population. The KDP and the PUK were never split along ideological, ethnic or religious lines. So to call this dispute a "civil war" is an even more egregious cop-out than in Bosnia, where the Serbian campaign of ethnic cleansing did ultimately bring about sectarian resentments that are by now the sentiments of a civil war. When Western officials insisted they were witnessing a civil war in Kurdistan, they did so as much out of convenience as out of ignorance. While this rhetorical sleight of hand allowed the West to feign toughness without risk, it actually strengthened Saddam's rule, as well as surrendered the precedent set forth by U.N. Resolution 688 that originally established the "safe haven" in northern Iraq.

U.N. Resolution 688, proposed by the French and American governments in April 1991, allowed the international community to override the hallowed United Nations principle of territorial sovereignty to protect a persecuted minority. Iraq's right to rule over its population was abrogated, and the Kurdish region became a virtual United Nations protectorate. Of course, there were no illusions about why this particular minority in this particular state was the beneficiary of the world's newfound concern for persecuted minorities. Saddam was a weak, isolated and easily vilified figure whose hegemonic ambitions threatened the flow of oil to the West. Nevertheless, the decision offered a glimpse of a more effective U.N., one able to act in a world marked by intra-state rather than inter-state conflicts. The recent collapse of the Kurdish safe haven, and the West's unwillingness to take the action which Resolution 688 allowed, makes it unlikely that the world will soon again be mobilized to save a persecuted minority within a state's boundaries.

This is not only a matter of morality in foreign policy. A strong, stable and lasting Kurdish enclave would not only have secured the Kurdish population; it would have permanently crippled Saddam's rule as well. The world and the region would be safer with a regime in Baghdad whose outward ambitions were limited by challenges from within.

The Clinton administration, however, after initially sponsoring the creation of a Kurdish parliament and the trappings of democratic rule, largely ignored the deterioration of the internal Kurdish situation. Allowing the Kurdish factions to descend into petty fighting—monumentally petty given their historic chance to secure their own land—the U.S. only sent minor diplomats on minor missions, without applying sufficient pressure to win a truce and without bringing home to Kurdish leaders what was truly at stake in their squabbling. Instead the U.S. concentrated its efforts on a hopelessly naïve $100 million CIA plan to support dissidents, supply weapons and train Kurdish and Iraqi agents to overthrow Saddam. This effort, we know now, ended with the emergency evacuation of all CIA operatives—leaving their Kurdish "students" to a grim and certain death at the hands of Saddam's security services.

A unique opportunity for Kurdish self-rule has been lost. With no sense of duty to their own people, and with little encouragement from their Western patrons, the Kurdish leaders of the Iraqi "safe haven" have committed an act of folly, unprecedented even in their own tortured history. A "Kurdistan" carved out of three such powerful and ruthless states as Iraq, Iran and Turkey was never plausible. What was possible was a sanctuary, a place where Kurds could escape persecution. That small, and yet very great accomplishment, is now lost.

NADER MOUSAVIZADEH is a former TNR associate editor.

Can the Golden State go color-blind?

ABSOLUTE CALIFORNIA

By Glenn Loury

The California Civil Rights Initiative (CCRI), which would end race- and sex-based preferences in state contracting, employment and university admissions, appears likely to pass. Both women and men support it, and even the margins of black and Hispanic opposition are small. As a long-standing critic of such preferences, I should be pleased, and I am, sort of. The complex of policies and practices known as "affirmative action" has been in need of reform for many years now. Preferences emerged, and have grown, within public and private bureaucracies rarely held accountable under the democratic process. Measures billed as temporary have become permanent crutches for people who are implicitly assumed to be incapable of competing. And the reaction to criticism of affirmative action has been, by turn, angry,

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hysterical, demagogic or simply inane. The opponents of CCRI have done nothing to redeem this shameful record.

Moreover, the Clinton administration's cynical (though deft) handling of the issue—first declaring amid much fanfare that affirmative action should be "mended" but not "ended," then dragging its feet on serious "mending"—has done little to elevate the debate. Thus, it should come as no surprise that many Californians who might have supported reasonable and modest public efforts to reduce racial inequality now stand ready to climb on the anti-preference bandwagon.

Had I a ballot to cast at the California polls this November, I would probably vote "yes" on CCRI—but with reservations. Its proponents have both better arguments and cleaner hands than its critics. As experience at the federal level shows, we cannot rely on those who administer government affirmative action to end set-asides for the wealthy owners of "disadvantaged" businesses or to close the near 300 point gap in SAT scores between whites and blacks at elite state universities. Were CCRI to fail, these outrages would continue without scrutiny.

But the initiative is flawed both in letter and spirit. Since its underlying premise is that a citizen's racial identity is wholly irrelevant to any proper state interest, CCRI implicitly denies that racial justice is a legitimate public goal. For this reason, I hope it will not frame the national debate on racial preferences in the coming years.

Ideally, racial identities should be irrelevant to our dealings with one another. Yet clearly they are not. As a result, all kinds of circumstances, having nothing to do with "racial preferences," require government to depart from the strictly "color-blind" treatment of its citizens in order to discharge its legitimate functions. A front-page story in the October 28 *San Francisco Chronicle* makes the point nicely. Reporting on an FBI investigation into excessive fighting among inmates at the Corcoran California state prison, the story traces the trouble to "an obscure prison edict issued during the 1980s—the integrated yard policy ... [which] required all prison yards to be integrated by race and gang affiliation." The article quotes a veteran prison guard calling that policy "naïve and stupid.... [A]nybody that's worked inside a prison would say that." Yet for a prison warden to allocate exercise time among inmates so as to minimize racial conflict, he would have to behave in something other than a color-blind manner.

This example is not trivial. Last summer, the conservative federal judge Richard Posner upheld the preferential hiring of a black prison guard in an Illinois boot camp for young offenders. He argued that, with an inmate population that was three-quarters black, and given that "aversive training" methods familiar to Marine enlistees were to be employed at the boot camp, the state might have a compelling and thus constitutionally justifiable interest in providing for some racial diversity in the camp's officer corps. Similarly, would we insist that a black person using public mental health benefits for counseling about a race-related anxiety not be permitted to choose a black therapist?

Faced with such examples, supporters of CCRI invariably reply that race here simply serves as a proxy for some non-racial trait—like the ability to win the trust of the black inmate or patient. But this response is insufficient, for the crux of the matter is not the state's use of race as a proxy for some desirable characteristic in an employee, but rather the client's racial perception of it. In boot camp, a young inmate will be bullied mercilessly by guards who either have his best interest at heart or do not. If enough black youths find it easier to believe that this bullying is for some useful purpose when at least one of the guards is black, and impossible to believe it when they are all white, then the success of the training technique requires racial diversity on the staff. And this is true no matter how sophisticated the prison personnel office is at discovering, without using race, whether an applicant "truly cares" about his prospective charges.

Targeted outreach and recruitment efforts intended to increase the number of black applicants for some position are another non-color-blind practice that most people would accept but CCRI would outlaw. CCRI proponents argue that other kinds of recruitment that happen to yield relatively more black applicants would still be allowed. But an employer could not solicit with the overt intent to generate more black candidates. Thus no academic recruiting committee could include in a job letter the familiar phrase, "We are particularly interested in hearing about any outstanding women or minority candidates"—even if the blacks ultimately appointed were as well or better qualified than the whites rejected.

The aggressive recruitment of black candidates in the face of a manifest imbalance in, say, a police force—sending recruiters to heavily black high schools—clearly involves racial discrimination. It bestows benefits (better job information, a greater number of alternative job offers) on some black persons, and burdens (not being aggressively recruited) on some whites. Yet it is sensible when, for example, there is no shortage of white applicants, and aggressively recruiting at every school, rather than largely black ones, could raise costs by a factor of ten. Why should such a practice be outlawed?

Some "discrimination" against whites (through racially targeted outreach) may be the inevitable—and defensible—consequence of measures to identify and limit discrimination against blacks. Any effective anti-discrimination enforcement strategy will rely upon quantitative measures of racial hiring to trigger deeper scrutiny when there is a manifest imbalance, or to lend credence to an individual's complaint. The same kind of techniques are routinely undertaken when enforcing, for example, tax laws, anti-trust statutes and security exchange regulations. But, faced with this

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type of enforcement, a prudent manager will target his recruitment resources toward blacks when they are sharply underrepresented. This will spare his firm scrutiny, and, if it doesn't, he can at least tell auditors, "True, we don't have many black employees. But we tried aggressively to recruit them and found none qualified." Thus, the economic logic of anti-discrimination law enforcement can impel employers to "discriminate" against whites by targeting blacks for recruitment.

The broader point is that an ahistorical, racially symmetric, notion of governmental non-discrimination may be impossible in practice. Given the open defiance already exhibited by some administrators to last year's Regents decision to scrap affirmative action at the University of California, university admissions committees may try to pursue affirmative action covertly. But, since it is impractical to monitor every committee meeting or review every admissions decision, detecting non-compliance with CCRI—that is, discovering continued preferential admissions for blacks—will require monitoring the rates at which various groups of students, defined by race and by academic qualifications, are admitted. Schools with an unusually high number of black admittees, controlling for grades and test scores, will certainly draw scrutiny. The state, willy-nilly, will find itself counting students by race—only now it will be looking to make sure that not "too many" blacks are being admitted.

Anticipating the new regime, educators in California are busy devising alternative admissions formulas based upon non-racial "background" factors—Did they come from a single-parent family? Did they go to high school in an economically deprived neighborhood? Without explicitly using race, college administrators hope to retain some level of diversity. But the new process would be extremely subjective, and, since universities will try to hew as close as possible to the status quo, they will be tempted to adjust the formula to maintain current racial proportions. (How much weight, for instance, should be given to "single-parent household" relative to "low-income high school" in the index of disadvantage? The more weight on "single-parent" the greater the relative benefit to blacks.) This, too, the state would have to monitor for hidden benefits to blacks and Hispanics.

But even if color-blind absolutism were a coherent principle, I still doubt whether it would be consistent with social justice. Opponents of preferences point to the Vietnamese and other low-income, non-white populations who are doing reasonably well, saying in effect, "You see, race per se has nothing to do with the problem." This seems to me obviously false. The disparities between the life chances of a black versus a white or Asian youngster born today into households of similarly modest means in South-Central Los Angeles constitute a social justice problem with a racial dimension. Because of cultural differences, differences in opportunities afforded by the surrounding social environment and differences in the reactions of outsiders (employers, for instance), the black youngster faces objectively more disadvantage, and that disadvantage is deeply related to the social fact of race in America.

What I mean by "the social fact of race" is captured in patterns of intermarriage (much higher between whites and Asians, and between Anglo whites and Hispanics, than between whites and blacks), patterns of interracial adoption (much less likely to favor black infants, even allowing for the indefensible obstruction of interracial adoptions by some misguided blacks) and patterns of residential segregation (much more likely to isolate low-income blacks than low-income whites).

For example, there is growing evidence that younger, unskilled black males experience labor market discrimination. Many employers view these slum-dwelling youths as unreliable, unwilling to accept supervision and prone to crime. This is true of some, and not of others, and, given the limited information at hand, it may be rational for an employer to simply avoid these young black men altogether. But this creates a vicious circle—denied a chance to show themselves worthy, dispirited young blacks behave in ways that make them appear unworthy. Some subsidy to, or pressure on, low-wage employers to give these kids a chance to prove themselves, despite the terrible (and, too often, deserved) reputation which "their kind" brings to the workplace, can, I think, be justified.

The tragedy of extreme black poverty does not justify racial preferences, which overwhelmingly benefit the black middle class, but it gives the lie to the color-blind absolutists' claim that government can dispense social justice without taking note of race. All the talk about "aiding the poor regardless of race," seems fatuous when set alongside the reality of many millions of ghetto-dwelling blacks, whose race is clearly part of their disadvantage, since it lies at the root of their social isolation.

This brings me to the most basic problem with the logic underlying CCRI. It denies that the government has any responsibility to reduce the gap in development between black Americans and others in the society. To be sure, it is wrong to pursue black representation by setting lower standards. But what is wrong with employers and schools seeking greater black participation by holding up a common standard of excellence while making a concerted effort to enhance black performance? What, for instance, is wrong with the policy of the U.S. Army (as described in the new book *All That We Can Be* by Charles Moskos and John Butler) which tries to increase the number of blacks in the higher ranks? Some of its efforts—like special ROTC scholarships at historically black colleges—are explicitly racial. Others are not explicitly racial but are, and are intended to be, of particular help to blacks—like the military prep school which brings West Point candidates up to academic standards, and which

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is responsible for some 40 percent of black admissions to the academy. All evidence indicates that these programs have been successful in producing genuinely competitive black officers, without racially differential standards or quotas of any kind.

I doubt any comparable efforts would survive CCRI. For, like a white police force's targeted recruitment of black applicants, these attempts to improve black performance are not color-blind. They involve—let's put it plainly—racial discrimination. Yet, I believe that many of those in California voting "Yes" on Proposition 209 would agree that, in our society at this historical juncture, undertakings like the Army's are worth the cost. What distinguishes this "developmental affirmative action" from the more familiar "preferential affirmative action" is that it takes black underdevelopment in late twentieth-century America seriously. It deems that underdevelopment a matter of importance to the entire nation and seeks to address it forthrightly, rather than hiding from it by lowering standards for blacks.

Perhaps those California voters would also agree that a state university system that consumes billions of taxpayers' dollars should not accept with equanimity its virtual exclusion of an important, historically subjugated population. If so, they might consider finding some way, in the post-CCRI environment, to permit programs that provisionally admit a limited number of less-qualified minority applicants to the university, conditional on their raising their math and verbal aptitudes to genuinely competitive levels after a year or two of study (without transferable credit) at a less exclusive institution. For my money, a person more interested in seeing social justice done than in hewing to an ideological line would either seize upon such a proposal, or advance a better one. •

CAMPAIGN JOURNAL

THE SEDUCER

By Michael Lewis

October 25:

Last night my father took a poll in the locker room of the place where he plays tennis and not one of the men there had any idea that either Bill Clinton or Bob Dole was coming to New Orleans today, which they are. The front page of the local newspaper reflects the general apathy. Beneath a huge story about who will be the next coach of the New Orleans Saints is a tiny map showing how traffic will be affected by the candidates. After a brief discussion of the various roads being closed to make way for Clinton's motorcade the story says, simply, "No roads will be closed for Dole."

As it happens one of my old classmates, Bill Kearney, runs the Dole campaign in Louisiana, and another, Jay Batt, is among Dole's most ardent supporters in New Orleans. The three of us agree to have lunch at a restaurant on Canal Street called the Palace Café, which is owned and run by another former classmate, named Ti Martin. Ti and her family are serious Democrats. When Clinton came to town a few months back he descended on the restaurant with only forty-five minutes notice. "Men with large guns wanted to know how to get to the roof," Ti recalls. "The president's dietitian wanted only one person to cook for him and only one person to serve him. By the time I went outside, Canal Street was blocked off in both directions and red velvet ropes were holding back hundreds of onlookers. When the Secret Service wanted to see the reservation book, I explained that much of our lunch business was walk-in, so he passed. Later we noticed one of the names on the reservation book was Oswald."

In the same way that you don't realize how essentially wrong a newspaper is until you read a story on a subject with which you are intimately familiar, you don't know what is wrong in a political campaign until you see it come to your hometown. The purpose of this lunch was to talk politics; but no one really wants to. I could sit here until Election Day asking questions designed to force them to lock horns and they won't do it. Ti wants Jay to keep coming to her restaurant; Jay wants Ti to keep buying clothes from his store downtown; and in any case they like each other.

I think the main reason most political journalism seems so remote from life as we know it in America is that in life politics is far down on the list of concerns whereas political journalism operates on the assumption that politics is the most important thing in the world. Ordinary people understand they are meant to exhibit a certain tedious seriousness when they talk to a journalist about presidential candidates, and so they do. I don't mean this as an insult to ordinary people. Apathy is a perfectly intelligent response to our current politics.

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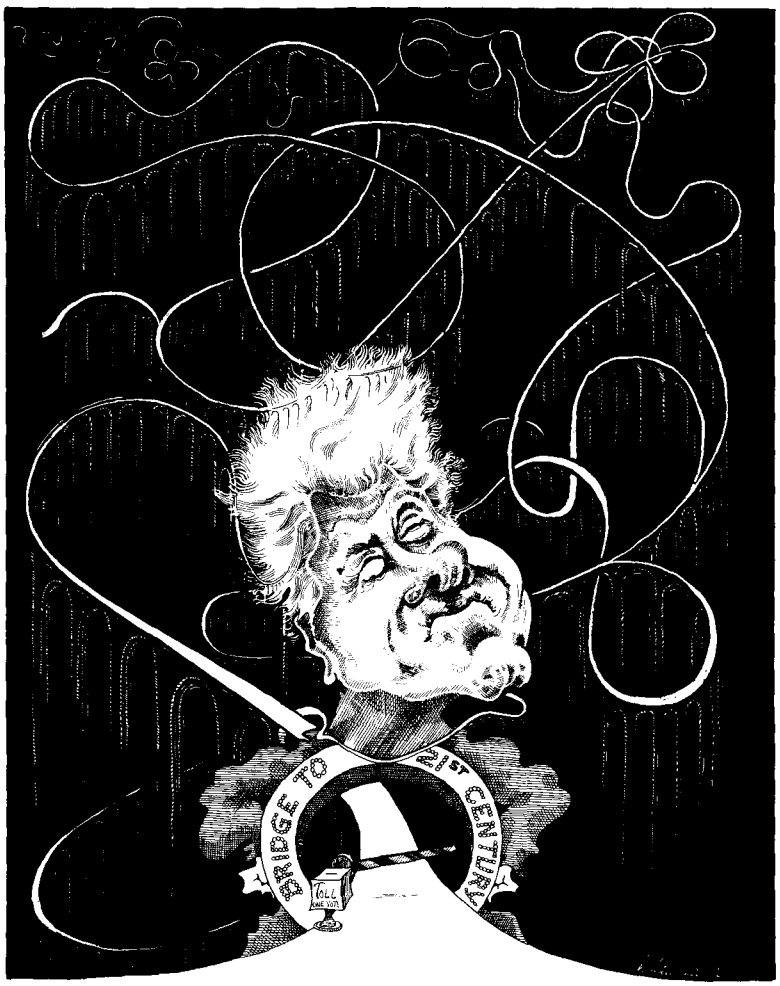
Before I leave Ti hands me a list of what Clinton ate the last time he came to the Palace Café:

MARINATED CRAB CLAWS, CRAWFISH GAZPACHO, PAN SEARED YELLOWFIN TUNA WITH CREOLE TOMATO CREAM AND LOUISIANA CRAWFISH TAILS, CATFISH, PECAN COUNTRY APPLE PIE WITH HOUSEMADE CINNAMON ICE CREAM AND CARAMEL SAUCE, WHITE CHOCOLATE BREAD PUDDING (A FEW BITES) HOUSEMADE RASPBERRY YOGURT (A FEW BITES)

This isn't an accurate reflection of his intake, Ti says, because the president kept reaching across the table and spearing food off the plates of people he barely knew. But even the official list of Clinton's consumption prompted a local columnist to write that, "anybody who can eat like that and then address the legislature is an inspiration."

October 28:

I had planned to spend a week in Little Rock and Hot Springs looking into the many Clinton-related scandals and outrages. I had even gone so far as to book the Governor's Suite at the Excelsior Hotel for the occasion. But then the letters started to arrive from my last attempt to dip my toe into these subjects—pamphlets purporting to prove that Clinton had Ron Brown killed; disquisitions on Clinton's cocaine habit; further evidence that Vince Foster could not possibly have committed suicide. "Mike," one writer wrote in an attempt to discover where I stood on these issues, generally, "Do you believe or tend to believe that Lee Oswald acted alone on Nov. 22, 1963 in murdering JFK? Are you comfortable about accepting that both the Croatian airport mechanic's and air traffic control officer's death shortly before the April crash [of Brown's plane] were suicides?"



BILL CLINTON BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Then Murray started calling again. You may recall that I quoted the narrator of the famous video exposé *The Clinton Chronicles*, Larry Nichols, saying that a journalist named Murray Waas, who was looking into the drug trafficking in Arkansas, had called him to say that he shouldn't help me investigate the Clinton conspiracies, that I was planning to write a hatchet job on Nichols. After that piece appeared Murray bombarded me with phone calls and messages, ranging from threats to apologies for saying he planned to have me killed. Soon I took to letting other people answer my phone. But even that didn't do much good. "It's Mike Samuels for you," said my house guest, as she handed me the receiver. It was Murray, of course, using one of his pseudonyms. "I can't believe all you said to me about Hillary Clinton," he said ominously. In the end I unplugged the phones. As I did, it crossed my mind that people who apologize for making death threats are possibly more dangerous than people who don't.

Perhaps the signal quality of both Clinton conspiracists and their chroniclers is their determination. They never give up. Murray has now taken to calling my employers to inform them he tape-recorded our phone conversations and plans to release the transcripts to *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*. Apparently I said some pretty damning things about Hillary Clinton. I also fabricated his quotes, he says. How he arrived at this last conclusion a month after the fact, I do not know. One of Murray's last calls came to Sydney, a new TNR intern, who is polite and pleasant almost to a fault. Murray took Sydney's formality as a sign that Sydney was trying to keep him at arm's length. "You don't have to be so formal with me," Murray yelled on the phone. But Sydney is formal with everyone. After he had addressed me as "Sir," for the fourth time, I said, "Sydney, you're going to have to stop calling me that." "I'm afraid that is going to be difficult, sir."

On balance, I have decided, it is better to let Clinton get away with everything than to become further involved in his conspiracies. Instead of going to Little Rock I head out on the road to witness what the Clinton campaign is calling "a summing up of his argument for re-election."

When I arrive in St. Louis the Clinton campaign plane is waiting empty on a tarmac. Clinton is speaking downtown; the only other people onboard are the

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four stewards, who are watching re-runs of Barbra Streisand's tribute to the Clintons. I pass the time reading *Unlimited Access,* the book about the Clinton White House by a former FBI man named Gary Aldrich, who was moved to write, he says, to prevent a security disaster in the White House. One of the reasons it is sitting at the top of the best-seller lists is that it can be finished in two hours. Another is that it pushes the genre into new territory. According to Aldrich, the women in the Clinton White House are not really women and the men not really men:

> [Mack] McClarty's physical appearance was also unusual. There was a uni-sex quality to the Clinton staff that set it far apart from the Bush administration. It was the shape of their bodies. In the Clinton administration, the broad-shouldered, pants-wearing women and the pear-shaped, bowling pin men blurred distinctions between the sexes. I was used to athletic types, physically fit persons who took pride in body image and good health. Arnold Schwarzenegger called the Clinton friends 'girlie men' during the campaign in 1992. I now knew what he was getting at.

The people who are consumed by their hatred of the Clintons—only some of whom believe that they sit at the center of many conspiracies—can be broken down into three schools. There is the Bad Investment School, which consists of people who have lost a great deal of money on an investment sold to them by someone who reminds them of Clinton. There is the Sublimated Sexual Jealousy School, which is comprised mainly of men aged 30-55 who are vaguely aware that Clinton is getting women to vote for and to sleep with him in the most unmanly ways, by feigning a kind of female sensibility—feeling their pain and all that—and thus transgressing the basic rules of the game. The hostility this breeds in some is akin to the hostility of the striking union member toward the scab.

Aldrich is a good example of the third group—the Law & Order School. The Law & Order School is defined in part by its scrupulousness. Aldrich notes all sorts of seemingly irrelevant details—the precise time of the day, the names of Vince Foster's children—which of course lends credence to his account. But at the same time he is counting carpet fibers he is repeating every wild rumor he has ever heard: that two male staffers were caught having sex by a White House security guard; that the president sneaks off to sexual trysts at the Marriott, hiding under a blanket in the back seat of a car; that the First Lady has busted another lamp in the West Wing. Aldrich's main charge, which he makes repeatedly, is that the Clintons and their employees are counterculture types with counterculture morals, which is to say few morals at all. Once onto this line of inquiry all sorts of seemingly innocent behavior can be revealed for what it is:

> It appears that Al and Tipper Gore decided to reward their "incredibly hardworking staff" after the inauguration by inviting them to a Grateful Dead concert. The Gores were described by a Gore spokesperson as dedicated "Deadheads." As an FBI agent, I knew the parking lots of Grateful Dead concerts were notorious open air drug markets.

Unlimited Access seems to be inspired by a very modern form of resentment, the kind of resentment that a man who has spent his life climbing the ranks of a large bureaucracy feels toward a man who leapfrogs up the career ladder through a special and obnoxious blend of deferments and degrees. Duty, loyalty and discretion are the qualities most highly valued in Aldrich's world; glibness, shrewdness and nerve are the qualities required to jump from Hot Springs to Oxford, then back to the governor's office and on to the White House. The Law & Order mindset is easy to make fun of but you do so at your peril, as Clinton has learned the hard way, struggling with both his salute and his generals. A status structure is a powerful thing. It can lead a man whose job is to protect the president to sound as if he'd rather kill him.

By the time I finish the Aldrich book, Clinton has given speeches in Chicago and Minneapolis. It is well past midnight. We're flying to Columbus, Ohio. A reporter in the seat in front of me is staring into his computer screen and tomorrow's first sentence. "In an abrupt departure from his remarks here four years ago President. . . ."

October 29:

I wake up in Columbus, Ohio, after five fitful hours in a second-string Hyatt and stumble onto the press bus heading for Ohio State University and another Clinton rally. Within moments the press filing center is hosting a press conference and Mike McCurry is making press-conference noises. "By now you know fully well the president's positions on pardons ... I have to check further ... pure speculation ... on prior occasions." He then introduces Bruce Reed, who explains how every third-grader should be required to pass a reading test. Bruce Reed was in my class in college. It's good to see him doing so well. At length the reporters are briefed on how much more money the Clinton campaign has to spend in the final week in Ohio than the Dole campaign. This no doubt will lead to even more stories about how Dole can't win, making it even more likely that he won't.

Today's reading is *The Seduction of Hillary Rodham,* David Brock's new book, which ostensibly is addressed to the sane reader. But the more hysterical the anti-Clinton propaganda becomes the harder it is to pay attention to any of it, except as a joke. You can't say that Clinton had Vince Foster murdered and then expect people to feel the same outrage when you say that Bill Clinton took 4 million bucks from a shady Indonesian. Gresham's Law applies to political insults as well as it does to anything else; the bad drives out the good.

Brock, the past master of the genre, understands this; indeed in some ways *The Seduction* was shaped by *Unlimited Access.* A few months ago he went so far as to disclose that Gary Aldrich had got his information about Clinton's visits to the Marriott from *him,* and that it was a fourth-hand rumor that should never have seen print. Now the man who brought us Troopergate and magazine covers depicting Hillary Clinton as a witch has writ-

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Sign language

It's not unusual for a president to fudge, duck and spin as legislation winds its way through Capitol Hill. But once a bill finally makes it over to the White House for autographing, he's supposed to decide. The presidential signature—with its Rose Garden pomp and circumstance—was one of the few unambiguous acts in American politics. No more. One of Bill Clinton's signature strategies, as it were, has been to exonerate himself of legislation he is simultaneously turning into law. Since football is this season's most overused campaign metaphor, you might say Clinton uses a grizzled quarterback's playbook to escape losses of political yardage:

The flea-flicker. When signing a bill his allies dislike, Clinton often pledges to correct its shortcomings later, when he gets the ball back. In April, Clinton signed the Freedom to Farm Act, which eliminated several New Deal-era federal subsidies. At the signing ceremony, however, Clinton declared he was authorizing the legislation with "very serious reservation" because "the bill fails to provide an adequate safety net for family farmers." He added that "I am firmly committed to submitting legislation and working with the Congress next year to strengthen the farm safety net."

And Clinton made a by-now notorious version of this pledge when he signed the welfare reform bill in August. "The bill I am about to sign ... is far from perfect," he noted at the Rose Garden press conference. Referring to substantial cuts in Food Stamps and aid to legal immigrants, he announced, "We can change what's wrong."

Can we? In April, Clinton heralded a sweeping new anti-terrorism law in a Marine band ceremony which featured the families of victims of the Oklahoma City bombing. Shortly afterwards, the administration released a statement warning that the new law "makes a number of major, ill-advised changes in our immigration laws having nothing to do with fighting terrorism"—including steps to make it easier to deport aliens suspected of terrorism. "The administration will urge Congress to correct them in the pending immigration reform legislation," Clinton vowed. But when Congress passed an immigration bill that was even more punitive toward legal immigrants than the anti-terrorism legislation was, Clinton signed it anyway—while promising to "correct provisions in this bill that are inconsistent" with international laws protecting refugees.

The pump fake. On occasion, the president signs bills into law while declaring that those laws won't actually take effect. On February 10, he signed a defense bill containing an amendment which mandated that military personnel with HIV be discharged. Just a day before, the administration's legal counsel had announced that Clinton thought the amendment was "abhorrent and offensive," not to mention unconstitutional, and that he had instructed the Attorney General not to defend it against expected court challenges.

Last July, the administration was similarly torn by the Helms-Burton act, which allows American citizens to sue foreign companies for using U.S.-owned property confiscated by the Castro government. The good news was that authorizing the act would help the president woo Cuban-Americans; the bad news was that it would alienate allies abroad. So Clinton allowed the act to "come into force," with the warning that "all companies doing business in Cuba are hereby on notice that by trafficking in expropriated American property, they face the prospect of lawsuits and significant liability in the United States." At the same time, however, he suspended the right to sue under the law for six months, until after the November elections. Said one senior aide: "This was classic Clinton. It's creative, but it runs the risk of looking like a waffle."

Two-minute drill. If he had world enough and time, Clinton sometimes explains, he could purge well-meaning laws of their pernicious caveats. Sadly, he rarely does. Last November, the president signed a Republican transportation bill that repealed the 55-mph federal speed limit, along with laws requiring use of motorcycle helmets and regulations on truck-driver certification and truck maintenance. Clinton opposed their repeal, saying "that some of my most serious concerns with this legislation have not been remedied." So why sign it? Because the bill also released $6 billion in highway funding that the White House claimed had already been held up for two months. Were the funds delayed any longer, White House spokesman Mike McCurry insisted, "many states would therefore not receive the federal funding they need to complete ... the [highway] system."

Several months earlier Clinton signed a sensible law allowing the self-employed to deduct 25 percent from their income taxes to cover health insurance. But Republicans tossed in a little treat for billionaires—allowing them to avoid paying taxes by renouncing their citizenship. Clinton called the loophole a "terrible mistake," and congressional Democrats urged him to veto the entire bill. Clinton signed anyway. On April 11, when he was asked why, he struggled for several minutes and then explained, "I did it because tax day is April the 17th."

Quarterback sneak. Then there are the times when the president authorizes bills for no other reason, apparently, than to be rid of them. Perhaps Clinton's most ignominious use of this technique was his recent signing of the Defense of Marriage Act, which barred federal recognition of same-sex unions. In rationalizing the president's apparent betrayal of gay supporters, McCurry declared that Clinton signed the bill because "the President believes the motives behind this bill are dubious and the President believes that the sooner he gets this over with the better." But, of course, signing a bill does not get it over with for those affected; it creates a law that they must live under. What McCurry meant was that the sooner he gets this over with the better for the *president.* Like Ronald Reagan, who in 1982 signed a $98 billion tax increase at his secluded California ranch (with nary a photographer in sight), Clinton showed his symbolic opposition to the bill by signing it at midnight.

Clinton has benefited politically in the last year from affixing his name to reams of Republican legislation—in doing so, he has reclaimed the New Democrat mantle that carried him to victory in 1992, and seems certain to bring him a second term. And by offering pointed criticisms of many of those new laws, the president has made a nominal effort to appease liberal supporters dismayed by his shift to the right. But these eleventh-hour oscillations have also fostered the perception that he sacrifices principle for expediency and, worse, that he has no core beliefs. Clinton may be completing his passes, but it has become virtually impossible to distinguish which team he is driving down the field.

ROMESH RATNESAR

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ten a *sympathetic* biography about the First Lady. Hillary may be a commie and a pinko, Brock says, but she is nevertheless principled. It is thus a shame that her career was derailed by Bill, who, we learn again, through repetition of the usual charges, is scum.

But in a gymnasium in Ohio, as Clinton winds up his speech, it's hard even to remember those charges. He's speaking off the top of his head:

> I was in Detroit the other day and I was told that in Wayne County there are people from 141 different racial and ethnic groups ... 141 in one county in America. There are only 192 different national groups represented at the Olympics. Amazing. But you look at the rest of the world. Pick up the paper on any day. And you read about the Middle East, or Bosnia, or Northern Ireland. Or Rwanda. Or Burundi. All over the world people literally torn apart by their differences. Why? Because there's something in human nature that makes people have to believe that they can only be important if they're looking down on someone else. Well, whatever is wrong with me, at least I'm not them. Now, we're trying to beat that rap. And that's why we cannot tolerate hatred or intolerance in this country.

After his speech Clinton reaches into the crowd with both hands; he's no longer shaking hands so much as grabbing at people as if he were kneading dough. Today it pays off again. Working the rope line he stumbles on a Dole supporter, a former employee of the Coast Guard. After a few minutes of discussing his idea to use the Coast Guard to support the INS, the man changes his vote. "I was a Dole supporter," he tells Clinton. "But I've changed my mind." The president turns to one his aides and like an excited little boy says, "Did you hear that guy? He said, 'When I came here I was voting for Dole, but I changed my mind.' Did you hear him say that? Did you hear him?"

I accept a ride on Air Force One back to Washington, which is to say that I begged so hard they couldn't refuse. I'm not even forced to sit in the press section—which resembles ordinary first class—but am allowed into the forward section—which is more like a fancy living room. A white phone beside each chair is answered by an operator who places your calls, and you can order up just about any bad movie you want. Mike McCurry glides back and forth a couple of times, but I am so far from the man in the front of the plane I might as well be back in New Orleans. I pass the trip time finishing *The Seduction of Hillary Rodham.* Think of it! The leader of the free world sits in his office playing hearts a mere few yards in front of me while a reporter sits reading a nasty book about his wife, the chief purpose of which is to strip him of whatever moral authority he retains. Such are the pleasures of living in a free society, where the losers become lobbyists rather than corpses.

October 30:

I am nearly seduced. But then suddenly I'm not. It's like this every time with Clinton. Just as I am being drawn to him my instincts of self-preservation take over and I pull back. It's not the character issue. Like Clinton I don't have much interest in facing the character issue head on except to say that it is more complicated than its politics. On the one hand he's cheated on his wife; on the other he's still married and seems to have been a pretty good father. On the one hand, he's adopted a set of socially conservative beliefs purely out of political expediency; on the other, he's taken some big political risks—gays in the military, health care—and paid the price.

No, the problem with embracing Clinton is that you know that you'll come to regret it. Maybe the weirdest aspect of his presidency is that his friends—and their ideas—have suffered while his enemies—and their ideas—have prospered. Not since Nixon composed his list of enemies has there been such a frightening and shadowy idea as Clinton's list of friends: Lani Guinier, Webster Hubbell, Vince Foster, Marian Wright Edelman, Mack McLarty. Only a fool would take a bullet for our president. But maybe this is okay for now. The challenge for the sane person who wishes to keep politics in its proper place is to define some new space in which to live with our president—somewhere between outrage and adoration. You can't beat him. You can't join him either. So let's use him! It's the ultimate revenge on someone who is so adept at manipulating others.

October 30: (Very Late)

The "Nightline" producer calls and as politely as possible tells me that my future in television may be limited. The first "Nightline" segment aired late, after Monday Night Football. Mercifully, no one I know watched it, so far as I can tell. The contrast between the power of the force field emanating from the Steadycam and the pale vibes of the final product is astonishing. It is nearly one thirty in the morning and I'm alone in bed. There is no denying that I was excited by working alongside Ted Koppel, driven less by a Fallovian desire to inform the public than a lust to become rich and famous. It is not to be.

The whole point of taking along the Steadycam, I now remember, was not to become famous but to increase the chance that I would get in to see Ross Perot. There was no way Ross was going to give an interview to a print person, or so I was led to believe by his people. But television was another matter. With only $29 million to blow on infomercials Ross needed as much free TV as he could get. So I called and put in a request I thought he couldn't refuse: Would Ross give me a tour of his private art museum? One thing about rich people is that they like to show people what they own, I figured. But no.

And so here I lay in the worst of both worlds—a "Nightline" washout watching Perot's infomercials, which turn out to be less info and more mercial than their predecessors four years ago. At least some of Perot's original appeal was the sense that the White House would be a sacrifice for him, a step down from his palace in Dallas. Now he seems to want to be president just as badly as the next guy. With perhaps one exception. •

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THE HARD QUESTIONS

Votes for sale

Reformers have long worried about the role of money in politics. So did George Washington Plunkitt, the boss of Tammany Hall. The problem with money in politics, he said, is that there's never enough to go around.

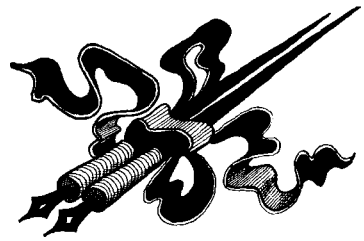
This time, there has been plenty to go around. The presidential campaign alone has cost $800 million. Is that too much? By one measure, it's a bargain. In the weeks just before Election Day, Americans spent $2.5 billion to celebrate Halloween. That we spend three times as much on candy, costumes and pumpkins as on our most solemn civic ritual is good evidence against the proposition that the people know best how to spend their money.

The real problem of money in politics is not the amount spent but the influence it buys. It's not exactly patriotic sentiment that motivates Philip Morris, AT&T, the Association of Trial Lawyers, and the Teamsters to contribute millions of dollars to the candidates and parties. Not surprisingly, neither major party has made campaign finance reform a serious issue this election year.

Bob Dole has tried to capitalize on revelations that the president accepted money from Indonesian banking and real estate interests. And the Clinton campaign has been calling attention to a Cuban sugar magnate who has given generously to the GOP and who benefited from Dole's defense of sugar subsidies. But lost in the volley of charges and counter-charges is the larger question of principle: If foreign money corrupts democratic politics, what about domestic money? What difference does it make whether our political deliberations are distorted by Indonesian banks, Cuban sugar empires or American tobacco companies? Why sell our elections to any moneyed interest, foreign or domestic?

Across the political spectrum, reformers have proposed measures to reduce the power of money—spending limits, free television time, the closing of loopholes that allow massive contributions to be funneled through the parties, the elimination of political action committees. But even the debate over these proposals, itself too dangerous for Clinton and Dole, leaves untouched the deeper corruption that afflicts our campaigns: the politics of self-interest. After all, if it is wrong for moneyed interests to bribe politicians with campaign contributions, isn't it also wrong for politicians to bribe voters with campaign promises directed squarely at their wallets?

Some bribes are more explicit than others. In Plunkitt's day, ward heelers distributed money, meals and favors to bring their people to the polls. In our day, it is more respectable to buy votes wholesale than retail. When casino promoters sought passage last year of a ballot measure to allow casino gambling in the state of Washington, the measure provided that 10 percent of the profits be paid to those who voted in the election. Opponents of the measure complained that the proposal constituted a bribe, but the other side argued that a portion of casino profits often goes to state governments. The Washington measure simply cut out the middleman and offered the money directly to the people.



In the early 1980s, the Supreme Court considered the case of a candidate for county commissioner in Kentucky who promised, if elected, to lower the commissioner's salary. His opponent charged that the pledge violated a state law barring candidates from offering constituents a financial inducement for their votes. The court rejected the challenge, ruling that the promised salary reduction did not constitute a bribe. But its opinion displayed the moral confusion at the heart of the politics of self-interest. A state "may surely prohibit a candidate from buying votes," Justice William Brennan wrote. "No body politic worthy of being called a democracy entrusts the selection of leaders to a process of auction or barter." Brennan asserted, but did not defend, a sharp distinction between buying votes and appealing to voters' self-interest. Our "tradition of political pluralism" assumes "that voters will pursue their individual good through the political process," he wrote. Personal benefit "has always been, and remains, a reputable basis upon which to cast one's ballot."

But what, really, is the moral difference between a politician who buys votes and one who panders to economic self-interest? Both offer a financial reward in exchange for a vote. If it is disreputable to sell my vote to a party boss for $500, why is it reputable to cast my vote for the sake of a $500 tax cut? Consider three possible, but ultimately unconvincing, attempts to distinguish the $500 bribe from the promise of a $500 tax cut (or other benefit):

(1) *The tax cut (or benefit) comes from public funds, whereas the bribe comes from private funds or party coffers.* But this makes the tax cut worse. At least the casinos in Washington state were offering their inducements from private profits, not state funds. If the voters must be paid off, better it be done with private money than with taxpayer dollars.

(2) *The campaign promise may not be kept, and so will exert a lesser influence on voters than an outright bribe.* But this suggests, perversely, that the moral superiority of the campaign promise rests on the fact that the politician who makes it cannot be relied upon to keep his word. In any case, if voters are skeptical that the promise will be kept, they can simply assign it a value that reflects their degree of uncertainty. A promised $500 tax cut with, say, a 50 percent chance of being enacted would be worth $250. It wouldn't be any more justifiable.

(3) *The campaign promise is public and available to all, but the bribe is secret and offered only to certain people.* But many campaign promises (to cut taxes or to dispense benefits) are also targeted at particular groups, or at least have highly differential effects. In any case, if bribes are wrong because they are offered to some and not others, why not universalize them? If votes could be bought and sold openly, the secrecy would fall away and everyone would be free to sell at the going rate. The $800 million now squandered on bumper stickers, lawn signs and attack ads could go directly to the people.

The reason none of these distinctions succeeds is that they share the assumption, familiar in our time, that the purpose of democracy is to aggregate people's interests and preferences as accurately as possible and translate them into policy. According to this theory, citizens are consumers, and politics is economics by other means. If this theory of democracy is right, there is no good reason to prohibit the buying and selling of votes. If, on the other hand, we want to retain the idea that citizenship is something money can't buy, there is good reason to reconsider the version of democracy we practice these days.

MICHAEL J. SANDEL

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

A Feast and a Shadow

Collections of film criticism abound, but I can't remember any collection of prose about film that was not mainly criticism. We've had collections of poems inspired by film but, until now, no prose anthology by insiders and observers about the film world—and its relation to the allegedly larger world around it. (In dream and fantasy, very few of us live outside the film world.)

Now we have one: **Roger Ebert's Book of Film** (Norton, 777 pp., $30). It's subtitled *From Tolstoy to Tarantino, the finest writing from a century of film.* Allow for the overstatement—and the alliterative yoke—and the book is a prize package. Ebert has read widely and remembered well. His book is divided into eleven sections, "Going To The Movies," "Movie Stars," "The Business," and so on; and each piece in each section has a headnote, helpful and often affectionate. A total of over 100 pieces. There is no section of criticism, though there are some reviews in other groupings, but Ebert has a small section called "Critics," made up of essays or memoirs. (Including, I must note, something of mine.) Otherwise, the book comprises articles, interviews, excerpts from biographies, short stories and excerpts from novels.

Some of the selections are predictable: pieces from Percy's *The Moviegoer,* Isherwood's *Prater Violet,* Ross's *Picture,* and a story by Fitzgerald. Still, if they weren't included, we'd feel that they were missing. Many of the pieces are little-known or long ignored. Tolstoy:

> When I was writing *The Living Corpse,* I tore my hair and chewed my fingers ... because I could not pass rapidly enough from one event to another ... But the films! They are wonderful! Drr! and a scene is ready!

E.M. Forster: "I am a film-fanned rather than a film fan.... About once a fortnight a puff of wind raises me from the seat where I have been meditating upon life or art, and wafts me ... towards a very different receptacle." Stark Young, once TNR's theater critic, who also wrote about films, provides the finest analysis I have ever read of Garbo's persona and effect:

> That remote entity of her spirit, a certain noble poignancy in her presence, a certain solitary fairness, a sense of mood that is giving and resisting at the same time: these defeat and break down the poor little common theory of naturalness and prose method. This player is not hoity-toity or highbrow or any of that, the public feels; she is not unnatural; she is like somebody, they don't know just who.

Brendan Gill, "a veteran champion of Women's Lib," as he describes himself, provides a cool rationale of his porno filmgoing. From John Huston's autobiography comes a meaty excerpt about film style and how to achieve it. "That rectangle of light up there with the shadows on it *demands* one's whole attention. And what it furnishes must satisfy that demand." Power, he reminds us, entails responsibilities.

Much, very much, more. Also, there's the second biggest oxymoronic encounter I'm aware of in this field. Up to now, the 1928 interview of Mack Sennett, father of slapstick, by Theodore Dreiser, reigned alone. (It's in George C. Pratt's *Spellbound in Darkness.* Dreiser's first question: "Just what excuse have you to offer, Mr. Sennett, for one more of your comedies?") Ebert gives us a meeting to put beside Dreiser-Sennett: H.L. Mencken's 1926 report of a private dinner with Rudolph Valentino. Valentino asked to see Mencken to ask his advice, and they met one very hot evening at the actor's hotel in New York. (It was only about a week before the star's death.) Valentino was the subject of some newspaper brouhaha and didn't know how to handle it; Mencken gave him sensible counsel. What's remarkable is that Valentino asked for the meeting, that Mencken went, and that he came away much taken with Valentino as a man.

I thought that Ebert's book might be one to pick up and nibble at from time to time, but he compelled me to read it right through.

Shine (FineLine) is an Australian film based on fact. David Helfgott is the son of very poor Polish-Jewish immigrants to Adelaide, people who lost family in the Holocaust. The father, Peter, is proud of the pianistic ability that David shows early, but wants to keep it for himself—for the family, so to speak. When sponsors offer to send David to London, to the Royal College of Music, Peter says no. Nonetheless, after much turmoil, including inner stress, David goes; studies; is recognized as exceptional; plays a concerto in public to an ovation; and

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Everyone Says I Love You. *Woody Allen's best. A musical, about some ditsy Manhattan lives (with interludes in Venice and Paris), set to terrific 1930s songs. Allen's direction dances like the tiptop dancers in the company. (Reviewed 11/11/96)* **The Line King.** *Al Hirschfeld, man and artist, is a delight; and so is this bustling, informative documentary. (10/21/96)* **Secrets and Lies.** *A young black London woman discovers that she comes from a white family. The cast, under Mike Leigh's wizardly direction, triumphs over the too-tidy conclusion. (9/30/96)* **Small Wonders.** *Exceptionally moving documentary about a New York woman who teaches violin to 150 students in East Harlem schools—and awakens them to themselves. Excellent. (11/4/96)*—**SK**

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Where We Stand

By Albert Shanker, President
American Federation of Teachers

The Schools We Need

Here's a Christmas gift suggestion for everybody on your list who is concerned about the state of public education: E.D. Hirsch, Jr.'s latest book, *The Schools We Need: And Why We Don't Have Them* (Doubleday, 1996). Hirsch, who made a lot of people angry with his 1987 book, *Cultural Literacy*, will probably infuriate still more with this brilliant, combative, and intensely practical discussion of how our education system got into its current mess and what we must do to pull it out.

For years we have been hearing that progressive ideas will save our schools. Skeptics who point out that these ideas have consistently failed are told that they haven't had a real chance—if school districts don't mess them up in adopting them, teachers mess them up in the classroom. Hirsch agrees with the skeptics. The problem, he says, does not lie in the way progressive ideas have been implemented but in the ideas themselves. Giving schools an even stronger dose would not reverse the damage. It would be like giving a diabetic who is in insulin shock another shot of insulin.

A basic assumption of progressives is that subject matter is not really important.

A basic assumption of progressives is that subject matter is not really important. Schools are teaching the "whole child," so it's up to them to choose the subject matter they consider appropriate. Indeed, progressives dismiss specific content as "mere facts" and say that teachers who concern themselves with it are condemning students to a painful process called "rote learning." The result is kids who are crammed with facts but who can't think for themselves and don't take any joy in learning.

Instead of worrying about content, progressives say, schools should teach children "problem solving," "higher-order thinking skills," and "critical thinking"—in other words, *how* to think. After all, the kids can always look up the information they need or find it on the Internet. And changes in the nature of work mean that thinking skills will be much more important than specific information.

All of this sounds plausible, but Hirsch says there is nothing to it. The picture of traditional educational practices is a caricature designed to shut off discussion; and there is no battle between learning and learning how to learn. Our schools have been disregarding content in favor of process for years. Furthermore, Hirsch says, there is no basis for accepting progressive ideas about how you teach children to think. The dismal record of student achievement points to the opposite conclusion. So does all the important research about how kids learn.

This research has shown that there is no such thing as an all-purpose thinking skill. Skills are domain-specific. That is, you need specific skills to think about geometry that are different from the ones you need to think about American history. Moreover, the dichotomy between content and skills is false. You cannot think without facts and information any more than you can bake a loaf of bread if you have a recipe but no flour or yeast or water. And, generally speaking, the more well-stocked your mind is, the better able you are to make the connections that are basic to thinking. If, on the other hand, you lack the necessary information, what you read will be meaningless. Most Americans who have tried to read a story about cricket in an English newspaper will understand this point. So, in order to develop thinking skills, children need what Hirsch calls "a generous number of carefully chosen exemplary facts."

As for the notion that teaching children content will turn them off learning, anybody who has seen the delight with which kids master the facts about dinosaurs or baseball teams or Egyptian mummies knows that is not the case. Hirsch concedes that focusing on content and guiding children in learning how to use what they know are not necessarily easy. But if we don't question the disciplined effort children must make to get on the soccer team or play the piano, why do we consider it a hardship for them to master important academic skills?

What should good schools look like in Hirsch's view? Teachers have detailed knowledge of the subject matter they teach. There is an agreed-on core of knowledge and skills that children are expected to learn in each grade, so that knowledge can build on knowledge and teachers can be sure of what their students have already learned. Because the goals are specific, students can be monitored and helped when they need it, and parents can know exactly what their children are learning. If this sounds like a traditional, no-nonsense, subject-matter-centered school brought up to date, that is exactly what Hirsch has in mind.

Progressives in education would tell you that one of John Dewey's central ideas is experimentation—try new ideas to see if you can do better. They seem to have forgotten that if you do worse, you should try something else. E.D. Hirsch's penetrating discussion of why the progressive experiment has failed won't win any applause from those who want more of the same, but the rest of us should be grateful for *The Schools We Need*.

Mr. Shanker's comments appear in this ad under the auspices of the American Federation of Teachers. Reader correspondence is invited. Address your letters to Mr. Shanker at the AFT, 555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001. © 1996 by Albert Shanker.

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then collapses, the victim of the stress caused by Peter's rejection of him for disobedience.

David goes back to Australia a compulsively jabbering hyper-neurotic, yet quite blithe. And quite incompetent to care for himself. Others care for him: his father won't see him. Eventually, Peter dies, which, in a way, releases David. Then, with the support of a beneficent marriage to an older woman, he returns to full life and to music.

If this weren't a true story, who would believe it? Well, a good many of us, probably. First, it's the kind of exceptional circumstance we like to dwell on as proof that pessimists are wrong; second, *Shine* is markedly well made, therefore persuasive. Scott Hicks, who has directed one previous feature and some documentaries, never sets a foot, or a camera, awry. All is deft, precise, empathic. That camera was in the hands of Geoffrey Simpson, an Australian who has worked in the United States (*Fried Green Tomatoes*, among others) and who has a feel for atmosphere. The editing by Pip Karmel is supple.

But it's the acting that really creates the film—four actors in two roles. Armin Mueller-Stahl is granitic as the father, sentenced to his obdurateness by the events of his life. One could argue that the film's subject is the after-effects of Hitlerism. If the father hadn't seen his family destroyed, he wouldn't have been so harsh—with the son who loves him and would like to obey him—in his effort to preserve the family; and thus the father would not have created the torment for the son that caused his neurosis and almost ruined his life.

Three people play David: a boy, Alexander Rafalowicz, who is appealing; a youth, Noah Taylor, as the London student, who is moving; and Geoffrey Rush, as the man, vivid in his neurotically jagged, gabbling amiability. Besides these four performances, John Gielgud, quite unsurprisingly, gives a lovely small performance. Now well past 90, Gielgud takes on that familiar role, the Old Maestro, and manages to touch it to life. He plays the London teacher who perceives David's gift and fosters it. This master has an exalted opinion of the third Rachmaninoff piano concerto, and Gielgud contrives to make even that opinion (temporarily) credible. •

Robert Brustein on Theater

Whose Faust Is It Anyway?

The Broadway-bound musical playing at the not-for-profit Goodman Theatre in Chicago, following its inaugural run at the not-for-profit La Jolla Playhouse on the West Coast, is titled **Randy Newman's Faust**. Not Goethe's Faust or the anonymous *Urfaust*, not Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* or Thomas Mann's, not Gounod's opera or Boito's or Berlioz's *Damnation of Faust*, but that of the popular singer, tunesmith and soundtrack writer, Randy Newman.

The name of David Mamet, who has composed his own theatrical excursions into Hell, is found in the program as co-author of the book. And one exchange of dialogue—after Lucifer overhears Hitler complaining that his dog is sick again and snarls back "Fuck him!"—is vintage Mamet. But as a late arrival on the scene, Doctor Mamet must have been consulted primarily about surgical and structural procedures. My guess is that this particular ego expedition is almost wholly Randy Newman's—the latest excavation by a pop archaeologist into the ruins of what was once called Western culture.

Randy Newman's Faust is about as true to its source material as, say, *West Side Story* is to *Romeo and Juliet* or as Superman is to Nietzsche's *Übermensch*. Newman's eponymous hero is no longer an intrepid seeker after knowledge, willing to risk damnation in his pursuit of the unknown (Heinrich Faust), but rather, no doubt to encourage ready audience identification, a hippie-dippie rock-and-rolling undergraduate from Notre Dame (Henry Faust) who brandishes a punk guitar and strikes everyone as an asshole. (His idea of fun is to go around bursting children's balloons.) Faust's love interest, Margaret, materializes as an innocent 21-year-old virgin from Gainesville, Florida (which already begins to strain credibility), who somehow falls in love with this swain, despite his pea-brain and acid-head (straining credibility still further). And the minor demon Mephistopheles has been upgraded to the Prince of Darkness himself, now a Las Vegas sharpie sporting a goatee and a brown satin suit and keeping company with a toady named Don Juan (who behaves more like his own flunky Leporello).

As if these changes didn't lower the philosophical stakes enough, the Father of the universe has been transmogrified into "The Lord," a feeble clone of De Lawd in Marc Connelly's *Green Pastures*. He is played by an imposing African American actor with a vibrating basso, who instructs his band of angels in gospel singing whenever the action flags ("F Sharp, ladies, no minor chords today").

The plot of the musical follows Goethe's story fairly closely—as closely, that is, as an indistinct shadow follows a giant in full stride. When Lucifer refuses to sing along with the other angels—he considers Heaven "the invention of an animal who knows he's going to die"—the Lord banishes him to Hell (actually, to the orchestra pit), an action that Lucifer immediately protests ("It's not my fault—you know what my childhood was like").

In the infernal regions—the gifted set designer Thomas Lynch imagines Hell as a cross between an industrial warehouse and a supermarket—Lucifer delivers a blues number called, with the kind of originality that characterizes the whole enterprise, "You Can't Keep a Good Man Down." After persuading the Lord to let him prove that Mankind was his biggest mistake, Lucifer tries to induce Faust to sign his name to a book and renounce his hope of salvation.

Faust is willing enough ("I'm getting something for nothing, right"). Actually, he has very little to lose. But he soon grows suspicious about the rewards, especially when the neatest thing the unhip Lucifer can promise him is a career as "a famous recording artist, like Steve Lawrence or Edie Gorme." Struck by Cupid's arrows (mythological consistency is not Newman's strong point), Faust falls hard for Margaret and signs away his soul after Lucifer kills her brother Valentine and the blame falls on him.

By the end Margaret is saved, though she is now being blamed for the death of Valentine and may have killed her infant child. After committing suicide, Faust is saved as well—why not?—revived by Margaret and an angel because he sees the error of his ways. In short, in the revisionist tradition of other recent musicals based on tragic works (*vide* Mimi's return from the dead in *Rent*), the affair ends in joyous resurrections, with the Lord, Lucifer and the entire cast singing a reprise of "You Can't Keep a Good Man Down."

Faust's association with Lucifer introduces us to a variety of historical figures, among them Nero, Napoleon, Caligula and a piano-playing Beethoven who

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speaks accented English. ("I hate it when they do that in movies," Lucifer remarks.) It also takes him to a variety of exotic places in order to participate in a variety of colorful rituals. These include a combined Easter and St. Patrick's Day parade in South Bend, Indiana, where Margaret's bosomy friend Martha gets the chance to twirl a baton and do a striptease, while the chorus sings "It's a fine day for the USA, and a damned fine day for the Irish." Martha provides the sex interest, though she doesn't respond much to Lucifer's sexual interest in her. Stealing the diamond necklace that Faust has given Margaret, Martha absconds to Costa Rica, as a pretext for a Caribbean number, on the order of Leonard Bernstein's "America," supplemented by Jerome Robbins-like Latino choreography. Aphrodite's appearance—like Cupid, she comes from another pantheon to stimulate Faust's passion for Margaret—inspires a song that would not be out of place in *One Touch of Venus*. A group of other melodies echo Kurt Weill show tunes, while Lucifer, introducing Faust to the attractions of Las Vegas, gets the opportunity to sing and dance a series of production numbers in the style of Gene Kelly and Fred Astaire.

The score, in short, though often rhythmic and melodic, also seems eclectic and derivative. The most successful songs are the gospels and the ballads. At least they display Newman's patented energy. I imagine some of the tunes will hit the charts, though they are better rendered on the all-star CD featuring James Taylor, Elton John and Bonnie Raitt, among others. The staging of Michael Greif, La Jolla's artistic director, like his staging of *Rent*, uses moving platforms and stairways to achieve a "poor theater" look, somewhat undercut by expensive-looking movies, strobes and slide projections. The cast is accomplished enough, especially Ken Page as the Lord; Kurt Deutsch as Faust; David Garrison as Lucifer; and Sherie Scott, who plays Martha as a ditz with a credit card (rather like Alicia Silverstone in *Clueless*). I would think *Randy Newman's Faust* has a moderate chance at being a success on Broadway. It is certainly dumb enough. But to initiate this sort of thing in non-profit theaters lends a new twist to the concept of selling your soul.

David Hare's new play, **Skylight** (Royale Theatre), has the advantage of a really shattering performance by Michael Gambon, who at the present time may very well be the most powerful actor in the English-speaking world. You don't care a whit that this hulking figure is somewhat miscast as a natty capitalist, or that he's starring in a rather anemic play. The argument between Gambon's character, the middle-aged Tom Sergeant, and his considerably younger lover, Kyra Hollis (strongly performed by Lia Williams), echoes the debate Bernard Shaw concocted between the millionaire arms dealer Andrew Undershaft and his Salvation Army daughter, Major Barbara. Sergeant runs a group of hotels and restaurants, and passionately defends his accumulation of wealth, while the even more passionate Kyra defends her dedication to improving the minds of poorly educated kids.

Informing this conflict is the continuing tension between Thatcher's Tory England and that of the Lib-Lab opposition. And it must be admitted that the playwright, despite his own liberal sympathies, doesn't load the deck. "I'm disqualified from having any feelings," Tom Sergeant moans, "because I made some money." Kyra, he notes, is always drawn to the injustice of the world: "The question is, why you went out to look for it."

Kyra replies that she hates those "right-wing fuckers" who sneer at social workers. Who else would perform the tasks they're willing to do? "What makes sense," she later says to Tom's rebellious son, in an anti-climactic coda, "is finding one really good pupil ... one private target and that's enough."

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Still, the intellectual argument of *Skylight* is weak and perfunctory. Hare seems considerably more interested in the dynamics of the personal relationship. Sergeant has returned to see Kyra following his wife's death, partly to ask forgiveness, partly to reignite their love affair. And although they spend one last night together, Kyra sends him into the cold morning air alone. The reason? He told his wife, before her death, about their affair. I can't say I follow the logic of this morality.

The unhappy ending of *Skylight* seems just as inappropriate as the happy ending of *Randy Newman's Faust.* But forget about the play. The evening is worth the price of admission just to watch Gambon crumple into fragments, disintegrate before our eyes, the moment he realizes his love for Kyra is futile. With his potato face and sleepy features, his Asiatic eyes hooded like a hawk's, Gambon looks more like a lumpy Irish coachman than an English plutocrat. And he wears his expensive overcoat as if he had just found it in a yard sale. Yet there is something immensely attractive and commanding in the way he inhabits this role. Dancing and feinting in a manner that belies his considerable bulk, he leaves us in no doubt that this character once took ballet lessons. His resonant voice barking and nattering through a remarkable range of human music, somewhere between an English horn and a Bach trumpet, Gambon can make the most declarative lines ring with irony and power. In perfect harmony with Lia William's vigorous Kyra, and under Richard Eyre's effortless direction, he manages to give a Lear-like weight to an essentially weightless character. Acting of this magnitude makes the stage a place of rare beauty and rude strength. •

Tyranny's Last Word

BY TZVETAN TODOROV

Giving Offense: Essays on Censorship by J.M. Coetzee

(University of Chicago Press, 289 pp., $24.95)

Literature does not proceed like science. It draws upon other means to lead to knowledge. The writer can project himself into the souls of people, historical or fictitious, and bring us revelations which, even if they remain unproven, can sometimes enlighten more than the long accumulation of facts produced by the historian, the psychologist or the sociologist. Through the shortcuts of intuition and the imagination, the writer can succeed where the scientist fails. The writer, moreover, has the advantage of his mode of exposition: through the narrative of a particular event or by linking disparate elements with a single image, he works upon the reader's mind and leads it to the fertile work of interpretation—that is to say, to the discovery of a second meaning, beneath the surface of words. Literary knowledge is not superior to scientific knowledge, but it is no less real.

I greatly admire the novels of J.M. Coetzee and so I was drawn to his essays; and so it is with regret that I note that Coetzee has chosen, in these essays on censorship, to renounce his literary identity and to think instead in the manner of a political analyst, a cultural historian and a literary critic. This book is not the work of an exceptional novelist, but of a rather ordinary social scientist. I found only a single page attributable to a novelist, and its quality made me dream of all the others that Coetzee might have produced on his important theme.

In that wonderful page, Coetzee offers a description of the self. Rather than summarizing psychological theories, he tells us that the self is "a zoo in which a multitude of beasts have residence, over which the anxious, overworked zookeeper of rationality exercises a rather limited control." More: "At night the zookeeper sleeps and the beasts roam about, doing their dreamwork." Some of those beasts are "semitamed but still treacherous earlier versions of the self, each with an inner zoo of its own over which it has less than complete control...." Does such a description not make your mouth water? Why are there no others? Is it pure chance that this page of Coetzee's book is also the only one in which he evokes his own experience as a South African writer who worked for many years in a country in which censorship raged?

In the rest of his book, alas, Coetzee writes as something other than what he is. The essays which comprise *Giving Offense* were written over five or six years. They share not only a common theme, but also a unifying idea. Coetzee is interested less in the institution of censorship itself, with its possible rights (the protection of the common good) and wrongs (the limitation of individual freedom), than in the writer's attitude to censorship, and his assessment of his situation. Coetzee's reflections are essentially critical. The writer, every writer, likes to see himself as a saint and a martyr, valiantly combating an omnipotent and abominable tyrant. But in reality, according to Coetzee, the difference between the adversaries is minimal: they are brother-enemies, mirror images one of the other. "In describing writer and censor as carried on waves of polemic toward identity or twinship, I implicitly grant them equivalent stature. With relief I therefore pass by the two tired images of the writer under censorship: the moral giant under attack from hordes of moral pygmies and the helpless innocent persecuted by a mighty state apparatus."

Coetzee struggles relentlessly, in this book, against this sentimental myth of the writing David and the censoring Goliath. He discusses three examples of tyranny: Nazism (very briefly), Communism and apartheid. The first is approached by way of modern interpretations of Erasmus. Stefan Zweig claimed Erasmus as his model and predecessor; he argued that Erasmus inclined toward pan-European humanism and against militaristic nationalism or fascism. But Coetzee observes that, for the real Erasmus, "to stand for one or the other" would be a sort of madness—the madness of taking a position. And he concludes, in a characteristically interrogative sentence: "Does the certainty of being right make Zweig's Erasmian individual and Zweig's fanatic nationalist-collectivist more or less alike? Does it turn them into opposites or into twins?" For Coetzee, the evidence suggests the latter.

Coetzee's examples of writers grappling with communist censorship and communist tyranny are more numerous and they are analyzed in greater detail. Mandelstam feared Stalin, but Stalin also feared Mandelstam, dreading the force of the poetic word which outlives tyrants. Mandelstam saw himself as a power, and he was right to do so: what transpired between Mandelstam and Stalin, in Coetzee's account, was "the power-rivalry of poet and despot." Don't we now respect the small Osip far more than the big Josef Vissarionovich?

At the outset of his essay on Solzhenit-

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syn, Coetzee warns against the danger of denouncing "the house of the censors or the house of Solzhenitsyn." In his view, the two are similar. In struggling against his enemies, Solzhenitsyn became like them. He displays a disdain for the law comparable to those of the censors, and his fate "illustrates particularly well the dynamic of spiraling mimetic violence precipitated by a collapsing of distinctions." Indeed, his hatred of Stalinism has made Solzhenitsyn into a little Stalin; or, more precisely, his admirers have reduced him to that role, seeing in him only the intrepid combatant against oppression and lies.

And it is much the same with other dissidents. When Mikhail Sholokhov, the official writer, and Lydia Chukovskaya, the dissident, confront one another in 1965 over Syniavsky and Daniel, Coetzee sees only belligerence and counter-belligerence. Zhores Medvedev, the scientist and dissident, was institutionalized in a psychiatric hospital, and, after his release, he published a work denouncing this imprisonment. Coetzee comments: "But one must bear in mind that turning the tables on the psychiatric world is itself achieved via a discursive power. *A Question of Madness* [Medvedev's book] can be read as an exemplary repressive book." More generally, "Cold War antagonism" is no more than a "structure of reciprocal paranoid definition."

Similarly, in battling against apartheid and its censorship, certain South African writers remained unaware of their unconscious imitation of the enemy. Thus, on André Brink: "It is as though the author has been infected by the violence of the state, and infected at the very level of his language." Since Breyten Breytenbach, in his public interventions, was happy to vilify the censors, in this respect he came to resemble them. "The very gesture of blaming, so widespread in his writing, mirroring the blaming of him by censor and judge, belongs to an ultimately futile strategy of demonization and expulsion." And in the world beyond literature: "The white policeman, the black revolutionary: enemies brought together in the mirror."

Coetzee informs us that the methods of his analysis are taken from René Girard, the Franco-American critic who, in a series of works, illuminated the mimetic structures of rivalry. But Girard's study of rivalry was only a part of his vast philosophical structure, which culminates in a panegyric to Christianity. Coetzee's real inspiration, even if he refers to him only in passing, is Nietzsche. It was Nietzsche who declared that there are no transcendental values, only wills to power, and that life is the supreme value;

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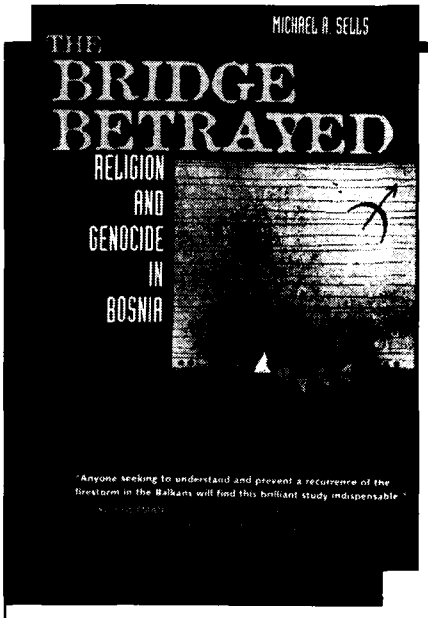
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and that right is but one force among others, and the law but a form of violence anterior to the others. It was Nietzsche, too, who concluded that truth does not exist, that there are no facts, there are only interpretations, which are more or less powerful.

Coetzee agrees with all this. To believe in truth, in Coetzee's view, is to share the illusion of the censor. "The censor is a figure of the absolutist reader: he reads the poem in order to know what it really means, to know its truth." Words do not lead to things. "There is ultimately no 'ultimately' in language; metaphors slide into (or interpret) other metaphors which slide into yet others, and so on." That is why it is impossible to eradicate racism, which is just one discourse among others. We cannot turn back racism; we can only read it.

It is Nietzsche, too, who is at the origin of the modern attack on the exorbitant ambitions of reason. Reason strives to push to the margins of madness all that is unlike itself; but the conflict between reason and madness must be reexamined (as Foucault said, in his Nietzschean history of madness), and the privileges that the reason grants itself, to the detriment of madness, are illegitimate. According to Coetzee, we must reduce "reason and madness to the status of warring twins ... each is imitating the other." Or: "in paranoia, reason meets its match." The superiority which reason accords itself, in such an analysis, is simply a mask of its force—in other words, of its tyranny, which is no different from any other tyranny. It matters little, writes Coetzee, "whether his tyranny [that of the censor] is the tyranny of political absolutism or of rationalistic reduction."

Having thus called into question the figure of the writer-combatant, Coetzee discreetly suggests another ideal. Coetzee hopes that his own book "is dominated by the spirit of Erasmus." According to Coetzee's interpretation, which is very different from Zweig's, Erasmus falls into none of the aforementioned traps. He does not believe in the superiority of reason over madness (did he not write *In Praise of Folly*?), and he refuses to take sides in the conflict between Catholicism and Protestantism, because to take sides would be to imitate the adversary. Erasmus's attitude "is not created simply by declaring oneself outside the fray. It becomes available only to the subject who creates himself outside the discourse commanded by, and commanding, the fray, that is, outside reason."

One value cannot be superior to another, it can only be stronger; and genuine superiority consists in renouncing values. Contemporary writers who loudly fight against censorship discover in their literary work the need to escape from any such confrontation. Thus the good Solzhenitsyn, the novelist, seeks not to kill his enemies, but to live "by taming them, imagining a way of living with them, living with difference." And the good Breytenbach, the poet, has discovered a similar wisdom: "living with his daimon and his demons," rather than fighting them.

Coetzee's argument can seem refreshing. There *is* a real danger that one will begin to resemble the enemy because one is fighting him, so as to fight him better. The fighters in the French resistance, for example, were aware of this. François Mauriac noted in 1943 that "in order to stand up to him, does he not condemn us to become just like him? Even in defeat, will he not force us to die inside ourselves only to be recreated in his own horrible likeness?" Vigilance is necessary, if one is to avoid granting a dark subterranean victory to the enemy whom one hoped to vanquish. Revolutionaries fighting authoritarian regimes conclude that their noble goal justifies all means, and thus they are ready to offend humanity more gravely than the tyrants they abhorred. (Dostoevsky didn't write *The Devils* for nothing.)

And yet the leap from this awareness of danger to the deconstruction of all values, to the renunciation of all struggles as futile, Coetzee's leap, is a leap that must be resisted. Was it possible to combat Hitler without in the process beginning to resemble him? It is hard to believe that anyone can doubt it. But then one must accurately draw the consequences of this possibility. Perhaps killing Nazis, from a certain point of view, was an evil; but this evil was incommensurably inferior to the evil which the Nazis, in pursuit of their own ends, inflicted. The only means to stop that greater evil was to fight it, and to win. This implies the appeal to moral and philosophical standards that permit us to make judgments of value, rather than seeing everywhere wills to power confronting one another. All evils are not the same. "We will fight until the end of the war," declares a resister in one of Primo Levi's novels, "because we believe that making war is a bad thing, but that killing Nazis is the most just thing that can be done today on the face of the earth." Zweig may have been wrong to want to enlist Erasmus in his cosmopolitan anti-fascist camp; but can we really see fascists and anti-fascists as twin, more alike than different? In fighting Hitler, one did *not* resemble him. Hitler was not fighting a dictator.

Is Solzhenitsyn as tyrannical as those whom he attacks? Is he just another "ayatollah?" Consider the facts: Solzhenitsyn (like the other dissidents, but more so) contributed to the ultimate downfall of the communist empire. What action of the Party Secretaries or the KGB chiefs would be comparable? And after the empire fell, none of the surviving dissidents took on the role of Stalin or Brezhnev; none became a tyrant like those against whom they had struggled. The analogy between Solzhenitsyn and the Party chiefs is false.

When, several years ago, Paul de Man's pro-fascist involvement in Belgium in the 1940s was revealed, some of his defenders argued that it was precisely to expiate this youthful error that he felt obliged afterwards to renounce all engagement, all struggle for the articulation of values, and to develop his theory of deconstruction. But this is an unacceptable conclusion: a wrong position does not render all positions suspect. Discovering that one is oneself capable of evil (a hard lesson, but a necessary one) should not lead one to abandon the distinction between good and evil, though it should keep one from identifying evil with others and goodness with oneself. As Solzhenitsyn himself has said: "The line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties either—but right through every human heart—and through all human hearts." In matters of morality, the refusal of Manicheanism does not entail the acceptance of relativism.

The discourse of Soviet dissidents may at times have resembled the discourse of their detractors: on both sides the adversary was accused of being a liar and a madman. But their destinies are not, for that reason, similar. What likeness exists between Stalin, who sent 15 million to the camps, and Mandelstam, who, upon arriving in one, perished of exhaustion? Between Sholokhov, whose accusations could lead to ruin, deportation or prison, and Chukovskaya, whose invectives were read only by a few dissidents such as herself? Between Medvedev, imprisoned in an asylum, and his jailers, generously described by Coetzee as the "psychiatric world?" Between Solzhenitsyn, the former and possibly future camp prisoner, and the apparatchiks delighting with impunity in their power and in the privileges that it brought them? And what man or woman, having lived in the East and in the West, could describe the cold war as the encounter of two perfectly symmetrical paranoias?

Coetzee foresees this type of objec-

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tion. He has prepared his answer. "One might respond that, as long as the rivals see each other as rivals, their objective statures are irrelevant." In other words: the objective world (and thus any attempts to tell the truth about it) is of little importance; all that matters are the subjective interpretations of the various protagonists, all of whom have the same status. For, if there is only discourse, then real differences dwindle, and similarities stand out, and the little Osip resembles the big Josef.

To see the absurdity of such a comparison, however, one has only to recall that, beyond words, things exist. To say that words refer only to other words, and metaphors to other metaphors, is a truism. It is true that dictionaries are made up only of words; but alongside dictionaries sit encyclopedias, whose words refer to things beyond language, to things in the world. Language is not a system closed upon itself; it can enter into contact with that which is not itself. And there lies the irreducible difference between a death sentence signed by Stalin and a death sentence in a poem.

To deem the "tyrannies" of absolute power and analytical reason equal is to make a fetish of words. Reason is accessible to all, power to a few. And to imprison oneself in discourse is to deny the possibility of ethical judgment, of a politics founded on anything other than force. It is not clear, in the frame of reference chosen by Coetzee, why one would condemn totalitarianism—or apartheid. The theorists of apartheid, he tells us, fight for a world in which differences are upheld, and against the universal interbreeding which does away with them. For them, "the world is a stage for a Manichean conflict between the principle of difference and the principle of indifference." But Coetzee has informed us earlier that the upholding of difference has its good sides: hierarchy prevents war, prevents the mimicry which degenerates into rivalry. "It is thus loss of difference rather than difference itself that leads to conflict." Apartheid is a form of paranoia, it is "mad, crazy," and its promoters "were possessed by demons"; but Coetzee also tells us that madness should not efface itself in front of reason, that it is better to accommodate one's demons than to expel them. Human rights, equality, universality—the notions upon which one must base the condemnation of apartheid—have no place in such a view of life.

Everything in this book reads as though Coetzee were defending himself against the charge of not having written more politically engaged work. His argument consists of saying that all engagement is futile, because the struggle against an adversary makes one like the adversary. This argument is wrong. But it is also, happily, unnecessary: Coetzee's position as a writer is above reproach. For the writer has no obligation, as a writer, to engage in political struggles. By means of his writing, he is already engaged, since his works help humanity to find meaning in existence, and no struggle is greater than the struggle for meaning. All true works of art create values, and in so doing they are political.

Coetzee knows this perfectly well, because that is how his novels develop; and he speaks of it explicitly in his essay on Zbigniew Herbert. Herbert asks, in a poem: What good are poets in times of distress? And in reply, he tells a story. Five men are to be shot at dawn. They spend the night chatting about this and that. Herbert concludes, with no transition:

thus one can use in poetry
names of Greek shepherds
one can attempt to catch the colour of
    morning sky
write of love
and also
once again
in dead earnest
offer to the betrayed world
a rose.

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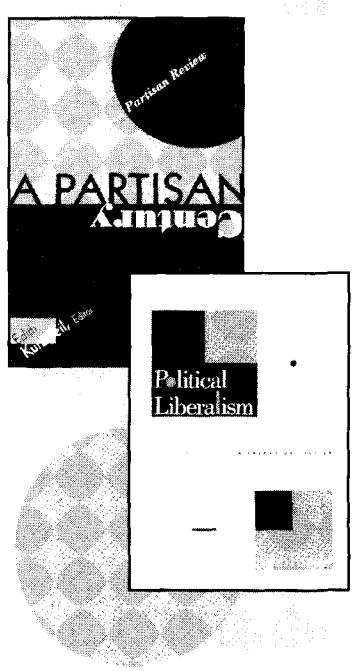

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himself to a cause, noble or ignoble, in order to accomplish his mission: he does so by being a poet. This is why, it is said, the Jewish combatants in the Warsaw Ghetto were particularly preoccupied with saving the life of the poet Berl Katznelson: not because he was a more precious soldier, but because his words could help the survivors to live better. The writer is not a hero, he is no better and no worse than an ordinary man, but his activity is *sui generis*. And it is not necessary, in order to affirm that activity, to see good and evil as twins. Indeed, it is necessary *not* to make such an affirmation. Coetzee the writer knows this, but Coetzee the critic does not understand it.

(*translated by Claire Messud*)

TZVETAN TODOROV is the author most recently of *A French Tragedy: Scenes of Civil War, 1944* (University Press of New England).

The Rite of Passage

BY CARYL EMERSON

Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions: A Biography of the Works Through *Mavra* by Richard Taruskin

(University of California Press, 1,757 pp., $175)

On page 1,513 of his astonishing two-volume study, Richard Taruskin challenges a famous remark made by Stravinsky in his autobiography, concerning the "prehistoric" sources of inspiration for *Le Sacre du Printemps*. "There was hardly a word of truth in this statement," Taruskin comments, "and of course Stravinsky knew it." Eight hundred pages earlier, in a discussion of the composer's oblique relations with Scriabin, Taruskin had written that "every word Stravinsky ever published on the subject is false and biased and must be dismissed." And two hundred pages prior to that: "The score of *The Firebird* is a veritable monument to the still-revered Rimsky-Korsakov ... in spite of Stravinsky's denials." For this is Taruskin's animating argument: that Igor Stravinsky, a complex, gradually maturing genius who was an outsider to every movement, a "foreigner" even to his native Russian folklore and most successful when manipulating that lore precisely for foreigners, could not be trusted for an account of his own genesis.

Why did Stravinsky falsify the record? Sometimes the reason was petty, such as his rivalry with Maximilian Steinberg, Rimsky-Korsakov's prize student, son-in-law and heir apparent. Or, as Taruskin writes, it could be "purely venal," as in his retroactive attempt to write Alexander Benois out of their collaboration on *Petrushka*. But the impulse to falsify was fueled also by situations more profound and personally mortifying, such as the irony of Stravinsky's neo-nationalism on the eve of the Great War, his having to accept "with bravado what in fact was an ambiguous and isolated, if prominent, position in the world of music": acclaimed in France for his "Slavic exoticism," he was reviled at home "for selling out to the cosmopolitan snobbery of Paris."

To undo one or two lines of Stravinsky's fibs about himself, Taruskin sleuths around for hundreds of pages. His reasons for doing so might not be readily apparent to readers too easily swayed by Taruskin's reputation for feisty revisionism, intimidating documentation and a confrontational style that relishes taking on the canonically great. Yet Taruskin has come not to bury Stravinsky but to praise him. He believes that by such protective gestures on behalf of his own creative history, Stravinsky sold himself short and diminished his own achievement.

It is Taruskin's purpose to restore that achievement to focus. He argues, among much else, that Stravinsky arrived at modernism by playing off the traditions of Russian folk music against the bland provincial art music of the Rimsky-Korsakovian tradition in which he had been raised. And this folklore was familiar to him not from his musical training and not from the folk itself. He knew it from the *miriskusniki*, the circle of Russian aesthetes and modernists associated with the cosmopolitan, fin-de-siècle Petersburg journal *Mir iskusstva* (*The World of Art*), edited by Diaghilev. In his masterworks of the 1910s, Stravinsky retained what was exclusively Russian and combined it with elements abstracted from Russian folklore so as to "excrete" from his style all traces of Europe. In the process, he became a synthesizer of genius. This great cosmopolitan was thus "the most completely Russian composer of art music that ever was and, if present trends continue, that ever will be." And all this, Taruskin assures us, despite the fact that in 1914, after the hideously "abusive domestic rejection of *The Rite of Spring*, "although he did not know it yet, and even though his 'Russian' style had yet to reach its peak, as a 'Russian composer' Igor Stravinsky was finished."

The paradoxes here are rich. Often displaying sign of colossal insecurity when confronting the outside world, and at the same time colossal arrogance, the artists of Russia have frequently opted to withdraw altogether from comparison with the West. This was Dostoevsky's boast: "We can translate the Europeans, but they cannot translate us." For the strengths of Russian culture have always been combinatory, transfigurative, absorptive. To present oneself as revolutionary, as intellectually autochthonous, is seductive. But more difficult—and in Taruskin's opinion, more Russian—is the synthesis that Stravinsky achieved between Western and Slavic music. By tacking forward and back, Stravinsky stitched together the most motley strains and musical genres. Once this synthesis was accomplished, he could recombine, or invent, a Russia of his own.

By the time of *The Rite of Spring* (and by the midpoint in Taruskin's study, the end of Volume One), Stravinsky had arrived at his three startlingly anti-symphonic principles: *drobnost'*, or disjunctiveness, rendered by Taruskin as "discontinuity"; *nepodvizhnost'*, or stasis, non-development; and *uproshchenie*, or structural simplification. These principles mimicked a fashionable "Scythian" collapse of culture into chaos, but more deeply they embodied a higher-order constructivism. Overstressing the semantic weight of a prefix, Taruskin is at pains to explain that *Uproshchenie* is the "simplicity of a higher truth," and it is not to be confused with *oproshchenie*, "the reductive renunciation of all refinement of thought and feeling in favor of the crude simplicity of the barbarian."

This set of principles served the composer for the rest of his life. But Stravinsky, uncomfortable in the role of "continuator," covered up his traces and mystified his debts. So where does one go for a biography of the man? Having dismissed Stravinsky's confessions and conversations as more or less autobiographical fictions, Taruskin attempts in-

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stead a "biography of the works." Thus his subtitle: "A Biography of the Works Through *Mavra*."

But what is a "biography of the works"? For one thing, it is a welcome relief from prurience. A "biography of the works" grants no priority to intimate events in the life of the artist. Daily details must serve aesthetic development. In this regard, Taruskin observes an enviable discipline. We first learn his children's pet names (Svetik, Mikushka, Fedik) in connection with the three little song settings that the composer dedicated to them in 1914. And we are given an unsentimental glimpse of personal tragedy tucked into a sentence in the "biography" of *The Nightingale*, the opera over which the composer was laboring in February of that same year: "Stravinsky, now living in the Swiss town of Leysin near the sanitorium in which his wife was confined with the tuberculosis that would eventually take her life, and working (now very much behind schedule) on the third scene, eagerly followed Struve's advice re Siloti...." Even the one naughty entry in Taruskin's two volumes—a fetching, three-quarters frontal photo of Stravinsky fully nude on a pier in Ustilug in the summer of 1912—is there to make a point about musical idiom: facing it is a photo of his teacher Rimsky-Korsakov, also in a verdant vacation setting, but stiffly and impeccably suited up.

Putting life-events in a properly subsidiary role, however, is only half the task. A "biography of the works" cannot retreat to the other extreme and examine individual masterpieces as free-standing and disinterested aesthetic objects. Life-stories, of any sort, grow. Thus they must mix the pressure of experience and the hard edge of formal analysis and construction, in such a way that ordinary readers are not cast down when discussions get technical and professionals are not put off by vague talk of matters that demand musicological precision. Here Taruskin is a wizard. Moving with what appears to be total recall through drafts and scores, juxtaposing Stravinsky's music with fragments of Rimsky-Korsakov, Tchaikovsky, Musorgsky, Scriabin, Debussy, and Russian folk melodies (the two volumes contain almost 700 musical examples), interpolating into the text whole backtracking chapters—such as the chapter on or around Opus 2, from 1908, which, although a minor work, requires for its proper appreciation a purview of chromatic harmony in Russian music since Glinka—Taruskin fills almost half his study with highly technical musical analysis. These patches stretch anywhere from four to eighty pages, each autonomous (and contentious) enough to be profitably put to use in seminars in music theory.

Still, a question might be raised about this book's intended audience. The initiated will study the interpolated technical portions carefully, whereas readers with no theoretical literacy will skip them. But that large middle category of the quasi-prepared will crave a gentler entry into the rigorously compressed argument. Take, for example, the matter of octatonicism: the eight-tone scale with alternating whole- and half-tone intervals or interlocking major and minor thirds. Rimsky-Korsakov pioneered this scale in his mature works, but he "cheated on it," that is, he employed it flexibly. Taruskin claims that Stravinsky, taking his cue from his teacher, realized the octatonic system more rigorously and in all its tonal complexity. The triadic material of the basic scale is provided on page 274, permitting the serious amateur to doodle at the keyboard and become convinced that authentic cadences are indeed not to be had. But it is not until page 591 that the full potential of Stravinsky's "ladder of thirds" is made manifest. Only at that point do we realize that by not cheating, by not slipping back into diatonic resolutions, a whole new set of options emerges, including perfect

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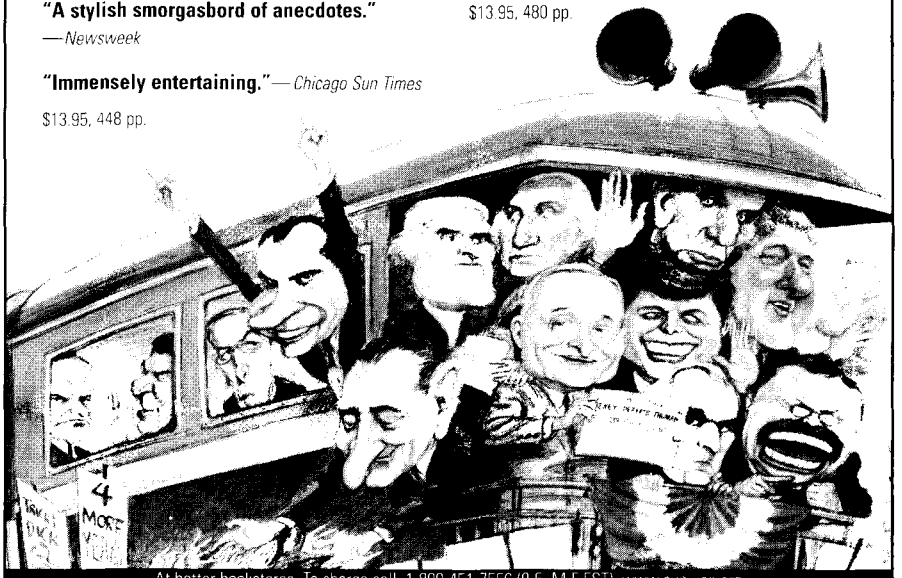

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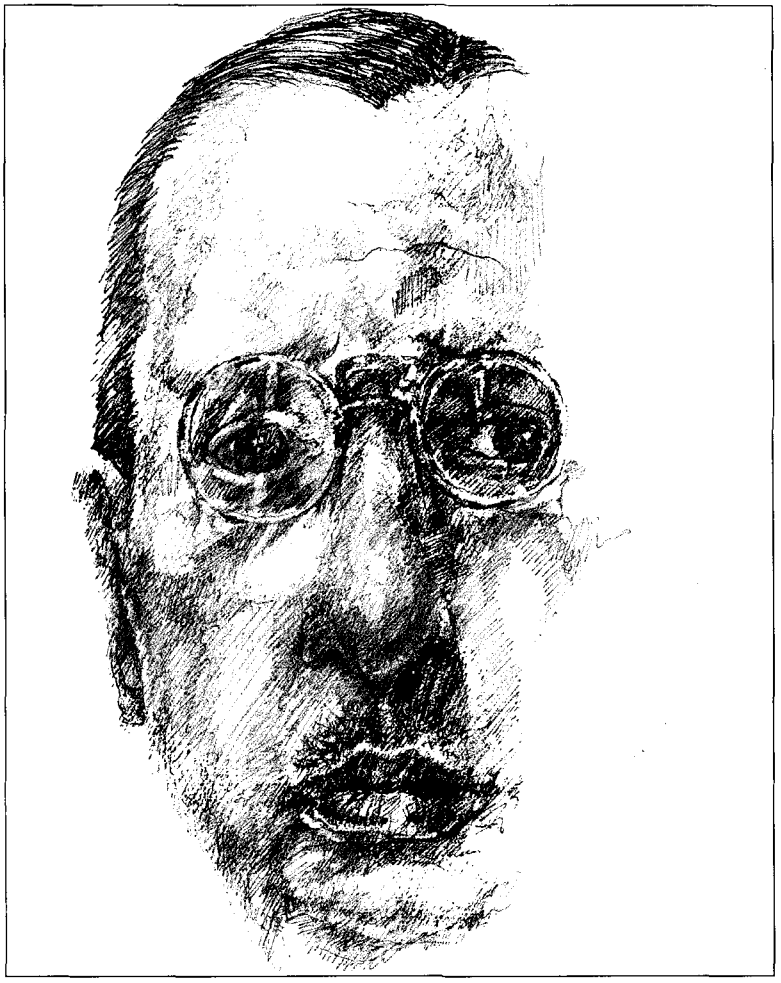
fourths and fifths made applicable to the entire domain of tonalities.

Each of the musical analyses is an "event in the life," like a marriage, a move, a job. With such commitment to detail, can the thread of the biography sustain its forward momentum? The techniques are many, but not least among them is knowing what to exclude. Discussing the pre-opus compositions, Taruskin spends several pages on an undistinguished school exercise and then assures us that this first piece is in no sense the starting point of Stravinsky's career, but only a "chance survivor" that cannot stand comparison with the products of the precocious Glazunov or the then 11-year-old Prokofiev: and so "enough of critique; one does not pursue a housefly with a blunderbuss." Not every piece that happens to survive qualifies as an event in this biography.

For a slow starter such as Stravinsky, the general feeding patterns are what matter. To ascertain these, thick description is needed. Thus the exceptionally dense professional context that wraps each of Taruskin's readings: day by day activities, alliances and rivalries, personal correspondence, the larger social and musical milieu. There are some fascinating excursions. Fully at ease in literary matters, Taruskin spends considerable time on the cloying Symbolist poetry to which Stravinsky was attracted, noting that for all the talk of "inner music" and a harmony of the spheres, the "media gulf" between Russian musicians and poets of the Symbolist period—that space separating poetic words from actual sounding tones—was profound. Ethnomusicologists will welcome his account of the advent of Russian folksong transcription aided by the phonograph, which revealed the modality and the irreducible polyphony of this music; or his brief history of the *klezmorim*, or Jewish village musicians, who, together with the gypsy fiddlers of Eastern Europe, provided the actual base for the sonic texture and rhythms of *Histoire du soldat* (and not American jazz and ragtime, as has been assumed). If this be formalism, it is formalism with a human face.

So: the works have a life. But it is nowhere near as tidy, reductionist and systematized a life as Stravinsky's contemporaries, the Russian Formalists, would have claimed for these works, had they written this musical history. Uncanny coincidences and near-misses abound. Diaghilev had tried four other composers—all of whom were indifferent or otherwise engaged—before commissioning Stravinsky, still known as the "son of the famous singer," to compose the music for *The Firebird*. The feuds among Diaghilev, Fokine and Benois almost brought work on *The Rite of Spring* to an end; and its "appallingly overdocumented" premiere in Paris becomes, in Taruskin's fiercely thick account that emphasizes the poisonous Russian reviews, even messier and more scandalous.

In all this great mass, momentum is also sustained through simple detective-novel techniques. The deed has been done: How did the suspect do it? And can we reconstitute its spectacular course, given that Stravinsky "became increasingly embarrassed by his past and did all he could to force it down an Orwellian memory hole?" To grasp these difficulties requires some understanding of Russianness in music. To that end, this 1,800-page study is, believe it or not, insufficient; but Taruskin has another huge book forthcoming, titled *Defining Russia Musically*. This second study is a very long plea to resist the temptations of Russian "exceptionalism," a claim that has been as damaging to Russia's politics as to Russia's culture—and as loudly trumpeted by Westerners as by Russians themselves.



IGOR STRAVINSKY BY DAVID SCHORR FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Exceptionalists argue that Russia is unique, exotic, separate from the rest of the world, destined to be measured solely by its own incommensurable and untranslatable values. Against this nationalist conceit, Taruskin puts forward three propositions. First, nationalism can be—and, in a multinational state, should be—inclusionary, not exclusionary; it can pull classes together rather than apart, celebrate hybrid forms, take pride in an imperfect, open multiplicity. Nationalism, insists Taruskin, does not need to be "purist." Second, Romanticism in Russia (and the neo-Romantic strain in the Symbolist movement) was not a Byronic rebellion or a revolt against autocracy, but a movement in league with church and state. Many Russian intellectuals, their lip service notwithstanding, were at heart ashamed of the *narod* (the folk) "as it was," but deeply seducible by the power of the state and the grandeur of national myth. Taruskin cites the Soviet critic Boris Asafiev: "however much Russian composers may have loved folk music, they did not trust it." And third, the artistic interest in the *narod*, or common people, is not synonymous with "realism." It certainly could not be reduced to realism of the mimetic, communication-based variety practiced by Musorgsky as the most radical member of the circle called the *Moguchaia kuchka* or "Mighty Handful."

Orthodox *kuchkist* composers would hear a hiccup, a wheeze, a line of exclamatory prose, and then seek its musical amplification, respecting the

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intonational curve and accentuation of ordinary uttered speech. But how Russian peasants talked and how they sang and made art were wholly separate affairs. As Stravinsky came to realize, the peasant's art was highly stylized. Vocal performances were valued not for their cathartic expressiveness, but for their impersonal delivery. It is of some import to note here that Russian *skazki*, or fairy tales, were valued by their primary audience and by Russian theorists of folklore in much the same way: not as psychological parables of adolescent anxiety that held some therapeutic value for the child—as Bruno Bettelheim suggested famously about the Brothers Grimm—but as lessons designed to reconcile individuals to a cold, often undeserved fate and to integrate them into the community.

Afanasiev's collection of folk tales, from which Stravinsky and his librettist Charles-Ferdinand Ramuz, during the war years, took the grim tale of "The Runaway Soldier and the Devil" for *Histoire du soldat*, is full of plots strung together by cynical non-sequiturs and unredeemed violence, where neither justice nor creative maturation has a place. Russians tend to see in their fairy tales not "family romances" or private Oedipal dramas. *Skazki* evoke cosmic, risk-laden confrontations of evil with good—and beneath it all is the unlikelihood of winning anything that will last forever.

If there was a wisdom of the folk then, it was that art saves us from the random disasters of life by disciplining life, and by counseling us to be humbled by that discipline. The task of art is decidedly not to explain life or to "express" life in the raw. If Russian peasants observed these stylized constraints in their art, the modernists who were inspired by their performance stylized them even further. The genius of the early Musorgsky notwithstanding, "realistic" does not mean formless or unformed, nor does "folkish" mean prosaic.

All these propositions, and the paradoxes that attach to them, are spectacularly illuminated by Taruskin's work. In this connection, we might mention two controversies, or myths, that have lain too long unexamined in Russia's "musical definition," and which Taruskin sets straight in the process of documenting Stravinsky's career. The first is a matter of history: the vexed issue of the late nineteenth-century musical heritage, of the escape from the closeted, often shrill nationalism of the "Mighty Handful" into the cosmopolitan neo-nationalism of Diaghilev-Stravinsky. The second is a matter of historical imagination: the

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fantastically bogus "Turanian" experiment, dreamed up by linguists and Eurasianists, that nourished the enormous creative triumph of *Les Noces* in 1923. "Turania" encapsulates the whole strange dilemma of "losing Russia" as a way of finding it.

The central figure in the turn-of-the-century transition was Rimsky-Korsakov, the teacher of Stravinsky, the *kuchkist*-turned-professor, to whose person, circle and extraordinary commitment to professionalism within the European tradition Taruskin devotes the first part of his study. Myths and malignings have distorted the record here as surely as they have with Tchaikovsky, another integrator of genius who suffered at the hands of doctrinaire Russifiers. For the old schism between Slavophiles and Westernizers has lingered as long in Russian music as it has in Russian literature and Russian politics.

In music, the basic opposition in the 1860s and 1870s had been between the militant, gifted *kuchkist* (including Balakirev, Musorgsky, Cui, Borodin and the young Rimsky) and the Westernized Conservatory founded by Anton Rubenstein. In exquisite and colorful detail, Taruskin documents the shifts in musical taste, patronage, institutional base and ideology from the 1870s to the Revolution; and these shifts crucially complicate the simple story of a schism. Rebel nationalists became conservative (and their pupils conservatory-trained), while Russian folkishness became official and began to be sponsored by wealthy merchant benefactors such as Belyayev and Mamontov; and by the time of Stravinsky's emergence on the scene, a fourth generation of this domesticated tradition was turning out smooth, competent, conformist pieces to rote under Rimsky's guild specifications.

The binary opposition between Slavophiles and Westernizers had not so much shifted as dissolved altogether. How, against this background, does an "event" register in a biography of the works? Stravinsky's early pieces are conservative, obedient, almost invisible. As Taruskin writes of the young Stravinsky's Opus 4, a boldly octatonic "fantastic scherzo" for orchestra called *Fireworks* (1908): "There is no real freedom of musical thought in *Fireworks*, and certainly no rebellion. It is still the product of a 'walled-in' Belyayevets imagination for whom there could be small advances in technique and no end of recondite detail, but no true novelty of procedure. *Fireworks* is not 'modern,' merely up-to-date, and therefore dated."

Stravinsky's slow detachment from the Belyayev Circle, and the miraculous timing of his Diaghilev commissions, permitted him to be inside and outside this tradition at once. His breakaway, when it came, was fully literate in the idiom that it left behind. Taruskin shows this corpus of debts throughout his two volumes, but with special poignancy in the chapter devoted to Stravinsky's reconstruction of the Old Believer choruses in the final scene of *Khovanshchina*, Musorgsky's final, unfinished opera. Diaghilev had commissioned the choruses for the Paris premiere of Musorgsky's work in 1913. The production dared to tamper with the canonized version by Rimsky-Korsakov—and so the revered teacher was cast, unwittingly, as a rival. But Stravinsky acquitted himself well. Looking back to an earlier period or to a prior Russian composer, he proved himself a master at that most difficult mode, the non-sentimental tribute.

The receptivity was not mutual. Stravinsky's collaboration with Diaghilev—directly in *Khovanshchina*, and then by association in the latter's highly successful staging of Rimsky's final opera, *Le Coq d'or*, as a ballet-cantata—involved the composer in charges of "vandalism" and "violation" flung at Paris from the anguished and possessive Rimsky clan at home. By the middle of the war years, the Russian boycott of the upstart Stravinsky was complete. According to Taruskin, this rejection helped to free Stravinsky from the "real Russia" (an entity soon to undergo cosmic changes, in any case) and readied him for his "rejoicing discovery" of Russian folk poetry and its attendant worlds: a primeval Slavic culture, a language and a music of Stravinsky's own making that could serve as the inspiration for a reborn nationalist imagination.

The sources for this vision were diverse. There was the neoprimitivist "Scythian poetry" of the Symbolists, some of which Stravinsky had already set as songs; a longstanding interest in Russian folktales, inherited from the Belyayev Circle and Rimsky's folk operas; a fondness for the more whimsical minor folk genres (jingles, children's rhymes, chants, ditties, fortune-telling songs, limericks, witching spells and charms); and then, of course, the stunning success of *Petrushka* in 1911, in which puppetry and animation were "mechanistic" in a beguilingly realistic way. The immediate stimulus, however, was the Eurasian movement, perhaps the boldest of the pre-Stalinist fantasies designed to take Russia altogether out of comparison and competition with the West.

Eurasianists—the most prominent were the wealthy art connoisseur Pierre Souvtchinsky, the linguist Prince Nikolai Trubetskoi and the philosopher Lev Karsavin—posited an Ur-Russia that owed nothing at all to European forms. As Karsavin preached in his book *The East, the West, and the Russian Idea* (1922), European culture was legalistic and individualistic, and therefore contradictory, whereas Russian culture was organic and harmonious, and allowed its members to realize themselves as part of a "higher symphonic personality" in a new "symphonic society." Such a society could dispense with the complexities of any intellectualized verbal or musical genre.

Eurasianism made the nationalists of Musorgsky's era, with their tame attraction to folk tunes and their passion for Schubert and Liszt, seem thoroughly European. Inspired by the "lower strata of culture," by contrast, Stravinsky constructed a primitive Slavic personality, maximally de-individualized and stylistically regimented, whose most intense pleasure was found in a frenzy of intractable repetition. "Stravinsky no longer wished to pluck the flower, as Rimsky-Korsakov or Chaikovsky had done," Taruskin writes. "He wanted to get down into the mud itself and mold a new Russian culture from the ground up."

On the brink of the Great War, Eurasianists employed the adjective "Turanian" to describe their artificed, aboriginal Slavic philology and culture. Its components read like a parodic exaggeration of Slavophile sentiment from the nineteenth century: mystic collectivism, Orthodox religiosity, obedience to absolute authority, the brutal vigor of the barbarian, freedom from the degenerate legalism that had enfeebled the Latino-Germanic peoples. "Turanian" was an attribute in circulation among Eurasianists, but the place name "Turania," is Taruskin's own coinage, and thus a second-degree fantasy: it refers "exclusively to the land of Stravinsky's musical imagination."

The Turanian vision only gradually gave rise to appropriate aural forms. Stravinsky's years in Switzerland, between 1914 and 1918, were increasingly marked by colorful, unclassifiable experiments in genre and dramatic form: his *Pribautki* (jingles or nonsense rhymes), *Histoire du soldat* and *Baika* (*Renard*). Stravinsky left off composing for ordinary symphonic instruments and began to employ an archaic pre-Petrine calligraphy in his manuscripts. But it was only with *Svadebka*, or *Les Noces*, eight years in gestation, that the Turanian impulse realized its full potential.

The biography of this work is pivotal for Taruskin. As its concept evolved, the

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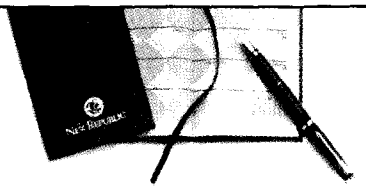
work was progressively abstracted, shifting from a conventionally folklorish ensemble that contained both choral segments and individualized solo parts to something (in Stravinsky's words) "perfectly homogeneous, perfectly impersonal, and perfectly mechanical." Folk art's lofty attempt to discipline life had found its ideal ritual. No longer was the theme appealingly childish, as with the puppets of *Petrushka* or the barnyard animals of *Renard*, or extravagantly sacrificial and macabre, as in *The Rite of Spring*. Now the most profound, spontaneous, universally experienced passions were to be celebrated—and harnessed. With its wholly ordinary human plot and its incantations to fertility, *Svadebka* was to be played as a sacrament in the most chaste sense. As one musician noted, the work was, for all its love-and-marriage content, "prickly and ascetic."

Ceremonial re-enactments of the peasant wedding had ample precedent on the Russian stage. With its highly formalized ritual laments, incantations, abrupt leaps from wailing to revelry, and complex role-play lasting many days, the *svadebnaya igra* or "wedding play" was a folk genre that would have appealed to Stravinsky's temperament. Yet none of the earlier theatricalizers had carried abstraction and inelasticity so far. Working with Pyotr Kireevsky's collection of a thousand wedding songs, Stravinsky's conceptual breakthrough came when he abandoned the linear narrative and fixed sequence in the songs and the rituals in the ceremony. Beyond the rough markers of combing and plaiting hair at the outset and consummation at the end, *Svadebka* became a series of synchronic tableaus, in which "time is frozen or telescoped." The end product was "Turanian" in its non-development and in its determination to seal the most powerful emotions in, as it were, precast containers.

These "containers for sound" are both more and less than the traditional theatrical soloist. The same "role" is sung by various persons of both genders (on occasion, the bride's mother is a tenor); verbal and musical units combine and interpenetrate in a highly fluid manner. Taruskin's exegesis of the musical texture, layer by layer, is downright eerie. Elements that are usually quite separable in analysis (melody, harmony, rhythm, verbal stress, pitch, phoneme clusters) appear to share the same attributes, those of a recursive refrain, "static, iterative, open-ended, noncadential." Step by step, beginning with Stravinsky's work on folk meters and stress patterns, Taruskin shows how motifs were abstracted, archaic church chants were reconfigured, anhemitonic motives were generated and a "tonal plan" achieved for the dramatic whole that was neither a functional harmonic plan nor a system of keys. The resulting musical fabric was logically motivated but cyclical and suspended in its effects. Remarkably, harmony had become an embellishment, a "surface veneer." Depth was replaced by planes. Music took up time, but it stood still. Turanian technique had at last matured into a system.

Svadebka raises ethical questions. Is it a rigid, patriarchal, Iron-Age depersonalization, or is it an expression of the human sublime, an exaltation and elevation of all that is liminal, transitory and sexually vulnerable into an abstraction that protects the privacy of the ritual by formalizing its parts? A bit of both, surely. In his analysis of "what might be called the precoital coda," Taruskin hazards a guess that the groom's crude words to his bride, and the powerful gongs that usher the newlyweds toward the marriage bed, suggest that "*Svadebka*, no less than *The Rite of Spring*, ends on a note of pitiless virgin sacrifice." Perhaps. But this is rather like reading the fate of the Snow Maiden melting beneath the spring sun as if she were Anna Karenina lying beneath the train. Stravinsky has made it very clear, in his text and in his music, that there is much relief and much pleasure to be had in a world in which the central events are sacraments, precisely because we do not need to choose.

Even so, there is a "runic," fascistic side to all this Eurasian regimentation and abstraction. For some, it will bring to mind ugly developments on the Russian scene today. But Taruskin, true to his calling as a biographer of the works, emphasizes the musical and rhythmic-phonemic dimensions of Stravinsky's achievement. The composer had elaborated a new musical syntax. And if Stravinsky's acquaintance with authentically transcribed folk music had taught him that displaced accents—unstressed syllables set to musically stressed notes—were natural and "true," then in *Svadebka* he took a further step. He made the "rejoicing discovery" that "the accents of the spoken language were there merely to be manipulated, like any other musical parameter, for the sake of musical enjoyment." As Taruskin observes, "Under the impact of Eurasianist thinking, Stravinsky made a complete about-face with respect to the prosodic traditions in which he was reared, an especially strict canon born of nineteenth-century Russian realism. It is another tale of self-liberation, and of playing a Russian tradition newly valued as authentic against one newly



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rejected as spurious." This method of aggressive juxtaposition and rapid-fire parody, Pushkinian in inspiration, is itself a Russian trait. To the earlier stylistic virtues of disjunctiveness, simplification and stasis, then, we might add a verbal component: the syllable liberated from the word, even from thought.

Taruskin's synthesis of these principles, like Stravinsky's synthesis, is dazzling. And yet the reader balks, bothered by the questions raised at the beginning that, like gadflies, refuse to go away. Of what, exactly, was Stravinsky ashamed? What was the substance of his regret? What goaded him to those falsifications? Did he really believe that he could have arrived at principles more aesthetically rich and productive had he been born in Vienna or in Paris?

The latter question broaches the master theme of Taruskin's work on Russian music and culture, the tie that binds it all together: Russia and the West. The answer to this question, not least in these post-Soviet days, is notoriously hard of access. But there could be no better focus for this time-honored opposition than Stravinsky in his early period, a creative genius half of Russia and half of the West. On this volatile border, Taruskin provides his hero with some fascinating test-case trajectories and shadow fates. If Stravinsky had remained in Russia, or if "Diaghilev had never happened to him," he might well have realized a career like that of Maximilian Steinberg, the dutiful favored son and the dignified, increasingly provincial Leningrad Conservatory composer and pedagogue. (Taruskin sketches Steinberg's career through his death in 1946, to give "an idea of Stravinsky as a Soviet composer.") Or at the other extreme, reconciled to a wholly cosmopolitan Western capital, by continuing to turn out neoprimitivist exotica "Stravinsky could have maintained a facile success with the Parisians indefinitely." Instead, the composer turned to Pushkin's "Little House in Kolomna," a witty, Byronic poem in octaves from 1830, and produced out of it the opera-bouffe *Mavra*, his "first great public flop."

The move to *Mavra* is the endpoint of Taruskin's study, but it is in no sense a resolution of its various tensions or strands. It is, rather, a challenge to both sides of Stravinsky's bold syncretism, something that would place Stravinsky permanently on the border and perhaps beyond all borders. *Mavra*, Taruskin writes, was "the work through which Stravinsky sought so deliberately to reposition himself vis-à-vis Russia and the West alike." Reposition, not reconcile or adapt. Laboring over the piece in 1922, Stravinsky insisted that it was "a masterpiece"; and although his "Russian" reputation was rescued by the delayed premiere of *Les Noces* the following year, the composer never forgot the failure of *Mavra* and never forgave the public.

Mavra was Stravinsky's attempt to return "Russian national music" to a European world after its residence in the pagan, proto-Asia of the Turanian period. But what did it mean for Russia to "return to Europe"? For Stravinsky, as for so many Russians in the early 1920s, it meant a return to Pushkin. Yet "turning to Pushkin" was like turning to the Bible: anything could be found in him, his genius lent itself to everything. Tchaikovsky had turned Pushkin into two very different operas, the sentimental-lyrical *Eugene Onegin* and the symbolist masterpiece *The Queen of Spades*; Musorgsky had transformed Pushkin's drama *Boris Godunov* into unsentimental, discordant, progressive historical theater; and a half-century earlier, almost within Pushkin's lifetime, Glinka had set the adolescent poet's mock-epic *Ruslan and Liudmila* as a sparkling pastiche-opera of imitative Russian folk melody and Italianate form. Stravinsky's first vocal settings (Opus 2, 1907) were to words by Pushkin.

But the 1920s were special. The war was over. During the years that Europe was applauding Diaghilev's brilliant and provocative brutalizations of the Russian spirit on the Parisian stage, Russia herself was being brutalized and "de-civilized," first by world war, then by revolution, then by

Thinking

I can't really remember now. The soundless foamed.
A crow clung like a cough to a wire above me. There was a chill.
It was a version of a crow, untitled as such, tightly feathered
in the chafing air. Rain was expected. All round him air
dilated, as if my steady glance on him, cindering at the glance-core where
it held him tightest, swelled and sucked,
while round that core, first a transition, granular—then remembrance of thing being
seen—remembrance as it thins-out into matter, almost listless—then,
sorrow—if sorrow could be sterile—and the rest fraying off into all the directions,
variegated amnesias—lawns, black panes, screens the daylight
thralls into in search of well-edged things.... If I squint, he glints.
The wire he's on wobbly and his grip not firm.
Lifting each forked clawgrip again and again.
Every bit of wind toying with his hive of black balance.
Every now and then a passing car underneath causing a quick rearrangement.
The phonelines from six houses, and the powerlines from three
grouped-up above me, some first-rung of sky, him not comfortable,
nature silted-in to this maximum habitat—*freedom*—
passers-by (woman and dog) vaguely relevant I'd guess though he doesn't
look down,
eyeing all round, disqualifying, disqualifying
all the bits within radius that hold no clue
of whatever is sought, urgent but without hurry,
me still by this hedge now, waiting for his black to blossom,
then wing-thrash where he falls at first against the powerline,
then airshaft seized, gravity winnowed, the falling raggedly
reversed, depth suddenly pursued, its invisibility ridged—bless him—
until he is off, hinge by hinge, built of tiny wingtucks, filaments
of flapped-back wind, until the thing (along whose spine
his sentence of black talk, thrashing, wrinkling, dissipates—the history, the wiring,
shaking, with light—)is born.

JORIE GRAHAM

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civil war and famine. Most of the artists who remained at home to witness this process very quickly shed the utopian and apocalyptic ecstasy that Bolshevik propaganda had fed upon. Russia's Silver Age had ended in an unprecedented bloodletting, and in the utter failure of art to recreate life in its own image. And so Russia's Golden Age—the Imperial 1820s and '30s, the Age of Pushkin—appeared to many in retrospect as a sacred retreat, an ideal and forever-departed haven of harmony, order, wit, civilized behavior, artistic constraint.

As the young Soviet state began to exile its greatest philosophers and tried its hand at its first show trials—the political fruits of 1921-22—Pushkin's era, with its human scale and cosmopolitan tastes, seemed hopelessly distant. And so the mythologization and deification of Pushkin reached a peak in Petrograd in February 1921, during festivities marking the eighty-fourth anniversary of the poet's death. Russia's most gifted poets and critics lamented that again, as in that dark day in 1837 when Pushkin was fatally wounded in a duel, "the radiant sun of Russian poetry was in eclipse." What is more, future generations would be unable to comprehend Pushkin's language or worldview because of the nightmarish *ogrubenie* and *omrachenie Rossii*, the coarsening and darkening-over of Russia during the Revolutionary years.

Was this the same Pushkin conjured up by Stravinsky in emigration, in that pivotal period when he was moving away from archaicized folklore and back to Russia's greatest poet? Yes and no. The Pushkin Revival of the early 1920s in Petrograd confirmed Pushkin as an icon, an object of worship. This was very much in the tradition of Russian saint-building, where ideas, cultural figures and political leaders are routinely turned into gods who will save us or demons who will destroy us—into anything, that is, but ordinary entertainment, or human beings doing their best. Hagiography has tolerance for multiple points of view. But hagiography was wholly alien to Stravinsky and his "constructivism of a higher order." In his *Autobiography*, he offered as an antidote his own image of Pushkin: "By his nature, his mentality, and his ideology, Pushkin was the most perfect representative of that wonderful line which began with Peter the Great and which, by a fortunate alloy, has united the most characteristically Russian elements with the spiritual riches of the West." This line included Diaghilev and (the composer modestly averred) himself. What precisely were those "most characteristically Russian elements"? Stravinsky did not elaborate. But we might do so now, for it is of some significance, I believe, that the final full-scale event in Taruskin's biography of Stravinsky's works is a collaboration with Pushkin.

A new scholarly edition of Pushkin's *Domik v Kolomne* (*The Little House in Kolomna*) had been issued for the anniversary celebrations of 1922. This curious and bawdy poem in forty stanzas, spun out of an anecdote about promiscuity and cross-dressing, was inspired by the medieval French genre of the *fabliaux*. It is framed at the beginning by a metaliterary debate on the merits of *octava rima* for Russian poetry in the 1820s and at the end by an empty moral. Clearly the poem was designed to highlight the problem of form. Sheared of its self-conscious play, the plot has a cast of four: a garrulous old widow, her nubile and resourceful young daughter Parasha, a dashing officer, and a fourth character, the cook Fyokla, who is dead on arrival and must be replaced. Parasha finds a substitute servant and brings her home. After several days of undistinguished domestic service, this cook, called Mavra, is discovered shaving by the old widow, who thinks a burglar has broken in to the house. Mavra disappears, and the narrator blames the complicated form of the poem for bringing the plot to this forlorn point.

What Stravinsky and his young librettist Boris Kochno took from this whimsy was only a handful of lines of dialogue, the names of the heroes (and the cat), and, as Taruskin intimates in an inspired discussion, Pushkin's phenomenal ability to borrow, to combine and to integrate. Parasha enters singing a sentimental imitation folksong; her hussar answers with a gypsy refrain; Parasha's gossipy mother, who reminds one of Madame Larina in Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, has a musical line modeled on a cavatina in Glinka; the aria sung by Mavra, the cook in drag, is a spoof on the Russian "cruel romance"; and throughout there are abrupt changes in tempo, melismatic passages, snatches of waltz, polkas and jazz rhythms. Like Pushkin's poem, the "cabaret opera" ends—or deflates—suddenly and unpretentiously.

What reviews there were after the premiere in 1922 were largely negative, and very few of those who saw the performance recognized Stravinsky's new piece as "Russian" in any of the acceptable ways. Yet Stravinsky continued to defend *Mavra* as a composition in the Pushkinian (and thus authentically Russian) spirit. It was not, of course, the whole of Pushkin. The heavier and

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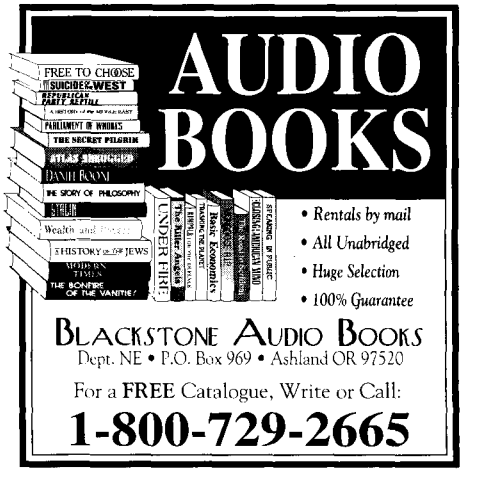

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more pessimistic aspects of the poet did not want for musical transposers, but Stravinsky's genius was nourished by the transparent, life-affirming elements, by Pushkin's neoclassical instincts. Stravinsky at the brink of the 1920s loved the light, aristocratic, amorous, nonpolitical Pushkin, the Pushkin who stood for the rights of a private life, who wrote drinking songs and love lyrics, who valued theatricals and French bedroom farce. Those modes, unlike the Wagnerian or revolutionary ones, made people happy and were harmless to human life. Any animal breeder will tell you that hybrids and mongrels are healthier, sturdier, on occasion more fertile, always more difficult to dislodge, sometimes even more beautiful.

In 1974, three years before Taruskin embarked upon his Stravinsky project, the Soviet musicologist Mikhail Druskin published a pathbreaking study about the composer. A year later Druskin was required to defend his book to suspicious party-line colleagues and ideologues; and only last year in an issue of *Muzykal'naya akademiia* (the successor to the professional journal *Sovetskaya muzyka*) was the transcript of Druskin's defense exhumed from the archives and published. It now takes some effort of the imagination to remember how dangerous all this was, how brave Druskin had to be during those years. Stravinsky destroys our established conceptions of things, Druskin assured his interrogators: "he is the only composer who is studied in both curricula [Russian and non-Russian] on music history. And any two pedagogues will not agree on how to divide him up. How should one classify *Mavra* or *Pulcinella*?" Stravinsky has been called a neofolklorist and a primitivist, but what, Druskin asks, does that mean?

> Does this mean populists [*narodniki*]? ... And in general, what is a primitivist, what are primitivists in music? Can one see in Stravinsky any analogy with Pirosmani or with Henri Rousseau? Such terminology, it seems to me, is mistaken, and harmful for an understanding of the nature of Stravinsky's art.... Is it not better to say this: that Stravinsky is one of those who facilitated an intonational renewal of Russian music. Why shouldn't we say that? ... I wanted to return Stravinsky home, return him to his homeland.... People think that Stravinsky was a spoiled child of fortune, that success spoiled him. But his fate seems to me tragic. And his days ended tragically. After his return visit to his homeland in 1962, he lived in nostalgia ...

Perhaps "nostalgia" is not the right word. But a powerful urge to integrate Russia and the West, while paring back both traditions to their essentials: yes, there Druskin was correct. For all his fibbing and his self-obfuscation, Stravinsky was not really a nay-sayer and an aesthetic simplifier, like Tolstoy. He did not rid himself of things. A better model, again, is Pushkin. In 1829, the poet traveled to Arzrum, a military outpost at the edge of Imperial Russia's border with Turkey. "I had never seen foreign lands, nor broken out from the borders of unencompassable Russia," Pushkin later wrote, with a mixture of chagrin and pride. But he could not get outside. No matter what river he galloped across, it turned out that Russian troops had already conquered its far bank. So it was with Stravinsky, a century later. Eager to get abroad, fed up with the confining reality of his fatherland, he was always laying claim to both sides of the boundary. Like a true Russian, he wanted it all.

CARYL EMERSON is A. Watson Armour, III, University Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures at Princeton University.

The Prophet in Profile

BY ARTHUR C. DANTO

Words, Script, and Pictures: Semiotics of Visual Language by Meyer Schapiro

(George Braziller, 200 pp., $30)

I was prevented by circumstance from attending the memorial service held for Meyer Schapiro this past September at Saint Paul's Chapel, the byzantinesque sanctuary in which Columbia University marks the deaths of its scholars and affirms the community to which their lives were dedicated. But from various reports of it I learned that relatively few of those in attendance belonged to the younger generation of artists and scholars, to whom Schapiro is a name, a legend, but not a living memory. This is perhaps to have been expected: some among the last phalanx of those to have heard Schapiro lecture before his retirement are today pondering their own retirements, and the function of the memorial service, after all, is to stabilize an image of the deceased in the consciousness of those who knew them as living presences.

The images that others carry of us are what Sartre described as our *être pour autrui*, our being-for-others, and when there are no such others our death is complete. The ripe age of those who came to Schapiro's service, together with the sparsity of the audience relative to the throngs who would have been there had he died, like his colleague Lionel Trilling, just after his retirement, was the measure of a transformation in knowledge, from memory to history, where scholars become at last objects of scholarship in their own right, and one with their public achievements. After the anecdotes have withered into record, what we are is what we have written.

It has always been somewhat difficult to reconcile these two kinds of knowledge in Schapiro's case. His powers were in large part performative, immediate, magical. He filled the space between his auditors and himself with sustained and intricate arpeggios of truth and interpretation, whole shimmering architectures, gothic in the audacity with which arch sprang from arch, vaults opened onto vaults still higher, as his lectures spun themselves into something vast, ethereal, brilliant—all of this effortlessly and urgently, from what seemed a limitless source of inspiration and information. It defied transcription; one could only take hopeless notes.

Schapiro had an unmistakable prophetic presence, if so grave a characterization can be made to fit with the lightness of his cadences and the wittiness of his style. I have never heard their like. It would be difficult, on the other hand, to elicit much of a sense of Schapiro's verbal performance from his writings, in which one sentence is laid down next to another, stone adjoined to stone, rarely resolving into the grand architectures that his lecturing brought into being, as evanescent as something Prospero summoned out of air, as if Meyer (as nearly everyone called him) were the vessel of some extraordinary external force.

I have never seen his manuscripts. I would guess that they are dense with crossings out, pastings in, scribbled afterthoughts, marginal notations, cryptic directions for further revisions. He was

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not an inspired writer. I conjecture that he was inhibited by his own knowledge of the discrepancy between his performances and his prose, which led him to work and overwork the writing, and only with great reluctance to allow it into print. And perhaps he had some sense of artistic commitment, polishing toward some perfect formal shape. In any case, he did not leave behind a body of published material which would give readers the measure of his genius.

Moreover, there is nothing that anyone concerned with the arts would be required to know as Schapiro's Theory, the kind of idea that informs general consciousness without being dependent upon some particular text. Unlike Heinrich Wollflin, Erwin Panofsky, Ernst Gombrich, even Rudolph Wittkower, Schapiro's knowledge did not seem driven by a larger vision which organized it all in some directed way. He was, to be sure, a gifted critic of such theories, though in truth the targets of his most celebrated demolitions—Freud on Leonardo, Heidegger on Van Gogh—have survived the worst that he could say about them. I have often thought of him as similar in temperament to his great friend and colleague, the formidable philosopher of science Ernest Nagel, who felt it to be intellectual contribution enough to exhibit the logical flaws in theories others found seductive. Their acuity perhaps made them diffident in proposing theories of their own. This means that the best of Schapiro's writings have the art historical specificity of his lectures, but without, for the most part, their dazzle, their intellectual beauty, their art.

The two texts published together in this posthumous book give as good an intimation of the living voice of Schapiro as written language can give. Both address medieval art, in which Schapiro was a specialist, in a way which redeems for the general reader what would rarely have had the excitement, visual or intellectual, with which Schapiro vests them, namely the illuminations of medieval books.

The first essay is concerned with the relationships between pictures and texts, when the former, as illustrations, seek to find pictorial equivalents for the written word. Medieval art, Schapiro points out, is very much an art of the book, in the sense not merely that it was driven by the sacred writings to which it undertook to give pictorial embodiment, but also in the sense that a great deal of the art went directly into the embellishment of books as inspired objects. The reader of such books—and reading these heavy, richly decorated and precious volumes would

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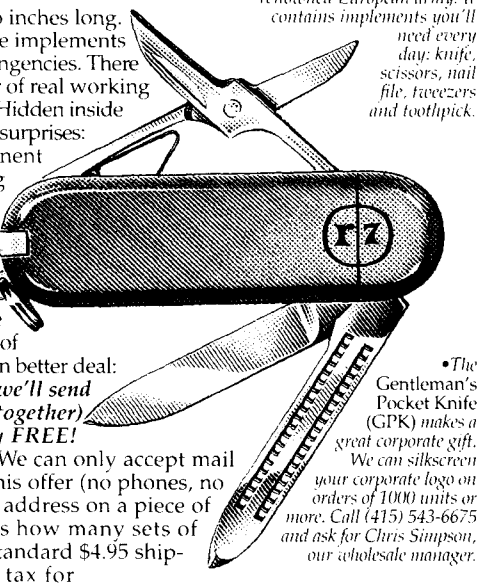

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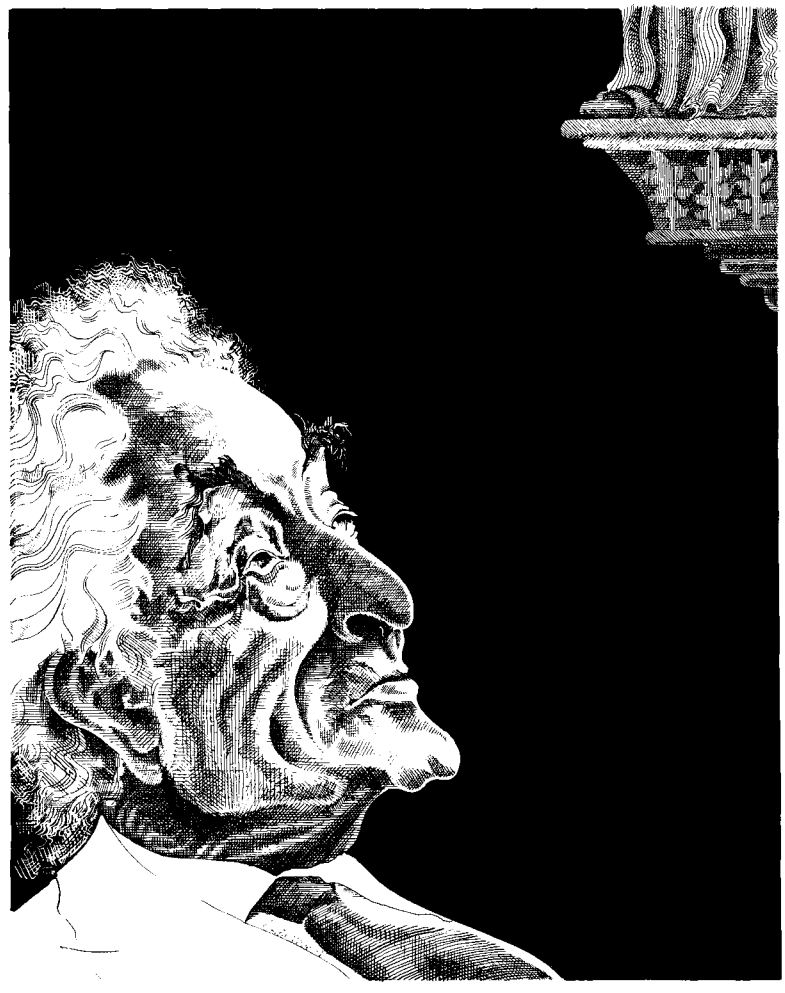
have been an activity immeasurably more involved with the physical qualities of the book than anything since the invention of printing could convey—would have had access to the same meanings but through two complexly interrelated systems of representation, which the medieval artist exploited with a subtlety that Schapiro makes palpable for us. It is fair to say, I think, that only someone who had thought through the transformations that representation underwent in modern art—in which Schapiro was also a specialist as well as a critic—could have seen through the pre-Renaissance strategies of the medieval artist, closer in some ways to Picasso or de Kooning than to Botticelli or Raphael.

Schapiro begins the first of his essays with a sweeping and clarificatory declaration: "A great part of visual art in Europe from late antiquity to the 18th century represents subjects taken from a written text." We immediately grasp that the bulk of Western art from late antiquity to the threshold of modern times consists of illustrations, and that our understanding of these text-bound images depends upon our knowledge of those texts, and in particular on how pictures relate to the words which hold their meaning. Since illustration is today regarded as a distinctly marginal genre, it has the force of a transformation of aesthetic values to recognize that there was a long artistic tradition, at once continuous and discontinuous with our own, in which non-illustrational art was marginal. And with this comes the realization that the pictorial aesthetics we have lived by almost blind us to the illustrational aesthetics medieval readers took as a matter of course.

Schapiro's first chapter, "The Artist's Reading of the Text," is a brilliant manual of how to make transitions from the one aesthetic to the other. It is filled with matchless aperçus:

> The text is often so much fuller than the illustration that the latter seems a mere token, like a pictorial title: one or two figures and some attribute or accessory object, seen together, will evoke for the instructed viewer the whole chain of events linked in that text with the few pictured elements, unless an incompatible detail arrests the interpretation. Examples are the paintings in the Christian catacombs of Rome where Noah stands in the ark, Daniel between lions, and Susanna beside the elders. But the meaning of such reductive imagery may be rich in connotations and symbolic values not evident from the basic text itself; these were fixed for the Christian viewer by what he had learned about the same themes from religious commentary and allusions in sermons, ritual, and prayer. Today that fuller meaning has to be recovered through a search of the old writings.



MEYER SCHAPIRO BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

The following two chapters concentrate on a single text-to-picture relationship, where the images illustrate the episode in the seventeenth chapter of Exodus, in which Moses controls a battle between Joshua and Amalek by holding up his hands. Because his hands grew heavy, he required the assistance of Aaron and Hur, who support them from either side. This is not the event in Exodus that most of us would think of first or even remember, but it was exceedingly important for early Christians, according to Schapiro, because it was "by assuming the posture of Christ on the Cross and making of himself the sign of the Cross, that Moses overcame Amelek. His general and successor is called Joshua, the Hebrew name of Jesus (Yeshua) which means 'victory.'"

Schapiro traces this motif through a sequence of representations, beginning with a fifth-century mosaic in Rome. It is a virtuoso demonstration of his astonishing scholarship. Schapiro had to be familiar with widely scattered illuminations, showing Moses with outstretched hands, standing or sitting. He had to have had an extraordinarily exact visual memory, with a search-and-retrieval system that brings to mind only computer technology. But not only does he make each of the images he cites critically interesting, he also tracks conceptual changes which modify the way the image is drawn and through which it is understood down the centuries.

One comes away from Schapiro's chronicle with the understanding that the Exodus episode was chosen for the sake of its natural illustration, since the medieval reader would have seen the Cross prefigured in Moses's posture; and that, in general, texts must have been highlighted for the pictorial possibilities which made Old Testament prefigurements of the New Testament vivid. The subject outlasted this style of reading, hence outlasted its role in formal analogies between Old and New Testament episodes. But, when it did so, Schapiro shows, the treatment of Moses stopped being cruciform: Moses began to be represented as an actor in an historical event which was no longer only the formal analog of a later event. And this in part meant that artists stopped showing Moses frontally, but showed him instead in profile, where cruciformity is less salient.

The essay ends with a remarkable discussion of the difference between representations of front and profile. Schapiro tells us, for example, that in Egyptian hieroglyphics "the profile head is the

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sign for 'head,' the frontal for 'face.'" Those who have followed recent art history will see in this distinction a prefiguration of the distinction between "absorption" and "theatricality" which Michael Fried uses to great effect in his analysis of eighteenth-century painting and criticism. In a way, Schapiro's analysis explains Fried's distinction through a fragment of pictorial psychology. Better than anything I have so far read by Schapiro, this remarkable essay, with its daunting scholarly knowledge, its marvelous organization, its richness of allusion, and its sudden and unexpected illuminations, will convey some sense of what the lectures were like. It is thrilling to have it in print.

The second essay, "Script in Pictures," is even more original, since it deals with words as parts of pictures in a way perhaps best modeled for contemporary consciousness by the writing inside the speech balloons (or thought balloons) in comic strips. The comic strip "takes it for granted that words can be enclosed in pictures." But "the written word does not have for the eye the same relationship to space as pictorial signs." Hence there is a different aesthetic for the combination of words with pictures than for pictures alone, and the aim of Schapiro's essay is to spell these differences out in great detail. It is a very philosophical discussion, inasmuch as it concerns questions of the different relationships between words and images to space and surface, with an interesting excursus on artists' signatures. And it is very wide-ranging, bringing in Greek vases, Goya and Manet, as well as Schapiro's more characteristic examples from medieval manuscripts and codices. Still, it has the air of being unfinished, which may explain its not having been published before. (The first essay was printed as a slim and now very rare volume.) Schapiro continued to seek examples from modern art—the uses of words in Cubism, in Futurist painting, and (though he offers only one example and it barely developed) in Conceptual art. It is odd that the obvious examples—the adjunction of poetry to image in Chinese painting—is not touched upon at all. One wishes that Schapiro had let go the text and allowed it to enter the stream of critical controversy; and it tells something about his own sense of himself as a magician that Schapiro held on to it.

He held on to a lot, from what I have been able to learn: to the Norton Lectures that he delivered at Harvard, to a series of lectures on Impressionism, to another on Abstraction, and a great deal more. All this is to come, and perhaps, if this volume is indicative, Schapiro's reputation will finally shift from that of a legendary speaker to a writer in a class with Ruskin and one of the glories of what is modishly called "artwriting," an artist in his own right rather than an academic star whose thaumaturgy is already slipping away from contemporary consciousness.

ARTHUR C. DANTO's new book, *After The End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History*, will be published by Princeton University Press.

TRB *continued from page 6*

Norquist and Dirk Van Dongen of the National Association of Wholesaler-Distributors organized "the Coalition"—twenty-eight business organizations drawn from the Thursday Group. To date, it has raised over $5 million to run ads on behalf of Republicans under attack by the AFL-CIO. "The purpose is to stop John Sweeney [president of the AFL-CIO]," says Josten. The ads accuse the AFL-CIO of spreading "lies" and "untruths" but contain questionable claims of their own—for instance, that "today Americans are paying the highest taxes in history." (Tax revenues increase with GNP, but federal tax rates now are considerably lower than they were two decades ago.) And, while the AFL-CIO identifies itself as the author of its ads, the business groups misleadingly credit theirs to "Americans Working for Real Change."

The AFL-CIO functions primarily as one pressure group among others inside the Democratic Party, but the members of the Wednesday Group, the Thursday Group and the Coalition represent a novel fusion of politics, parties, pressure groups and the media. Behind this new alliance rests a vision much bolder than the labor movement's: Norquist wants to transform the currently bipartisan K Street into a handmaiden of the Republican agenda. Lobbyists, corporate reps and business organizations, which previously cut deals regardless of party ideology, would accept the "radical free-market agenda" in exchange for influence over the timing and details of legislation. "If you are a lobbyist or a consultant for Exxon, you will have to be a Republican," he says. One Thursday Group operative, speaking on background, put this objective even more brazenly. "After the next election," he said, "we'll own K Street."

That depends, however, on whether the Republicans retain control of Congress, and by how much. When I asked Frank Coleman of the Chamber of Commerce whether he worries that the chamber's identification with the Gingrich Republicans will backfire, he replied, "We don't anticipate anybody other than Speaker Gingrich in January."

Norquist is not so ready to declare victory. He characterizes this election as "the Battle of the Bulge." "You guys break through and you'll slow us down for five years," he says, identifying me with the Democrats and the AFL-CIO. "You fail to break through, you are history. Do you really think the AFL-CIO is going to be allowed to fund campaigns as it does if the Republicans control the Congress?" It's quite a prospect, enough to keep some people voting Democratic well into the next century.

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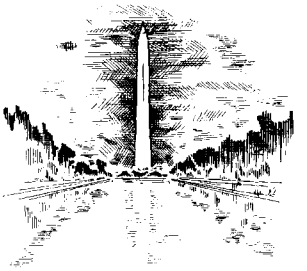
WASHINGTON DIARIST

Angels in the infield

"I'VE GOT TO GO—IT'S TIME FOR MY son's soccer practice," I apologized to an editor of mine in the middle of a phone conversation a while ago. "You must be a great mom," she sighed. (She's a great editor.) "Oh no, completely standard," I told her, sounding modest but feeling flattered and virtuously beleaguered. (The team meets in a park, inconveniently far away, where the toniest dogs of Georgetown also go for their evening romps, so the stench is as high as the pedigrees on display. Practice is not picturesque.) Just how completely standard, I was then only half-aware: this happened on a day, now hard to remember, before the "soccer mom" had become the cliché of the fast-waning 1996 campaign. Jacob Weisberg, writing in *Slate*, was among the first to demolish the notion that the soccer mom represents anything so coherent as a new swing constituency, crucial to a winning presidential strategy. But what about her status as a new social category with the power to alter maternal psychology? What happens when, unloading your little athlete and the team snack, you suddenly catch sight of yourself in the sideview mirror of your Taurus (or Dodge Caravan, or Volvo, or Jeep) and have to think, soccer mom?

WHAT HAPPENS IS THAT IT BEcomes difficult to feel so praiseworthy or so virtuously beleaguered anymore. Baby-boomer parents, certainly busy ones in the affluent suburbs, have so far counted on feeling both, often. On Saturdays in fall and spring all boys and girls over the age of 5 in leafy Northwest D.C. put on a team T-shirt, shin guards and cleats—soccer best, the secular descendant of Sunday best. An air of sanctimony has a way of hanging over the day's proceedings. Some mothers are rapt, and loud with praise and blame from the sidelines. Others of us who have vowed not to berate the players or the referees (our team does its best to adhere to the it's-a-learning-experience philosophy) can't count on basking in the glow of our children's triumphs all that often, so instead we bask in our own: out there on the big green, the village is vigorously raising its children. We are the very models of modern, major child-rearers. You can almost hear us humming.

NOW ALL OF A SUDDEN WE'RE plain old soccer moms. It's an anticredential, the kind of thing that gives our generation hives. "I hate to be a whole breed of something," one candidate for the category complained to *The New York Times*, "but I admit I have a talented soccer player, so as long as it is Dr. Soccer Mom, because I have a Ph.D., I accept." I'm inclined to think, which the *Times* clearly didn't, that this mom was making a little fun of herself. In fact, the undesigner label could be liberating for all of us. No, we're not going to make or break this presidential election. Nor, let's face it, are we really going to make or break that other election a decade or so down the road, either—you know, the race for an open freshperson seat and a four-year term. Having a soccer mom who's big on well-roundedness can't be the edge it once was when it comes to filling out those college applications. Now everybody's got one.



I'M SURPRISED POLLSTERS DIDN'T discover the "baseball dad." *The New York Times* did this summer, and made quite a fuss over him—Michael Sandel, a TNR contributor as it happens. He "schedules his paid job, as a Harvard professor and political philosopher" around the time-consuming avocation of coaching a little league team of fourth graders, the article marveled. But I suspect that Sandel, who never rewards "individual heroics, a home run, say, or a double play" (instead the whole team gets Snickers bars for cooperative efforts), would be the first to point out that there's nothing very individual or heroic about what he's doing. Busy fathers everywhere are ripping off their ties and sprinting for the suburban diamond at inconveniently early hours like four in the afternoon. (They do this for soccer, too; in fact, they're more likely than moms to coach.) Why didn't the election mythographers have a field day with them?

THE SPORTY WHITE MALE REPLACES the Angry White Male: it's a myth as good as any other, since men rather than women have arguably been the more volatile constituency, as Weisberg pointed out. Flightly females always make good campaign copy, but in fact Clinton's 1992 victory and the Republican triumphs of 1994 reflected a swing in the male electorate as much as anything. So who are the baseball dads, exactly? I have no statistics at my disposal, but "experts on gender politics," as the *Times* calls them, don't seem to let numbers get in their way, so I won't either. These men, to judge by the Sandel portrait and my own experience, cut a considerably mellower profile than the harried soccer moms of pollster legend. They're not pacing the sidelines and being pushy (or working hard at not being pushy). They're pitching, and distributing Snickers bars. T-shirts that proclaim "I don't have a life. My kids play baseball" aren't their style at all. They actually enjoy sneaking out of work early—and they can get away with it without risking their careers. If moms were comparably secure at work, and got to be on the mound and hand out prizes, instead of just carting the Gatorade, they'd probably lighten up, too.

AS FOR WHAT SPORTY White Men think about government, they're divided, undecided, inconsistent, some of them down to the very last minute—in short, potential soulmates of either candidate. So, the key question the presidential aspirants might have put to them as the campaign wound down is, If you had to miss a day on the diamond, whom would you like to have coaching your kids, Clinton or Dole? Both candidates look pretty great in baseball caps, as they took lots of opportunities to show as Election Day drew near. For gruff umpire material, you can't beat traditional-values Dole. By contrast, Dick Morris's effort to make the incumbent seem like a credible authority figure, the kind of guy who can make the really tough calls, was laughable. Still, there has never really been a contest. Clinton makes a natural baseball dad, full of energy and overflowing with empathy. I can see him in the dugout now, wolfing down the kids' Snickers supply.

ON THE SUBJECT OF SPORTS AND dads, one historical highlight stands out in the 70th Anniversary issue of *Parents* magazine, which I've been reading. Among the decade-by-decade excerpts is a piece from February, 1977, called "Meet Superstar O.J. Simpson: Home Is Always Where the Heart Is." Those were the days, now hard to remember, when O.J. was famous not just as a model athlete—a really nice guy who was great at the game—but as an exemplar of family values, too. O.J. "advocated stern discipline," readers were informed. He gave warnings, and then he spanked. "I found this is the most effective method with my children," he explained. "Talking to them endlessly gets us nowhere, whereas if I spank them, they are calm and repentant afterward." So that's what it takes to make a Simpson fess up.

ANN HULBERT

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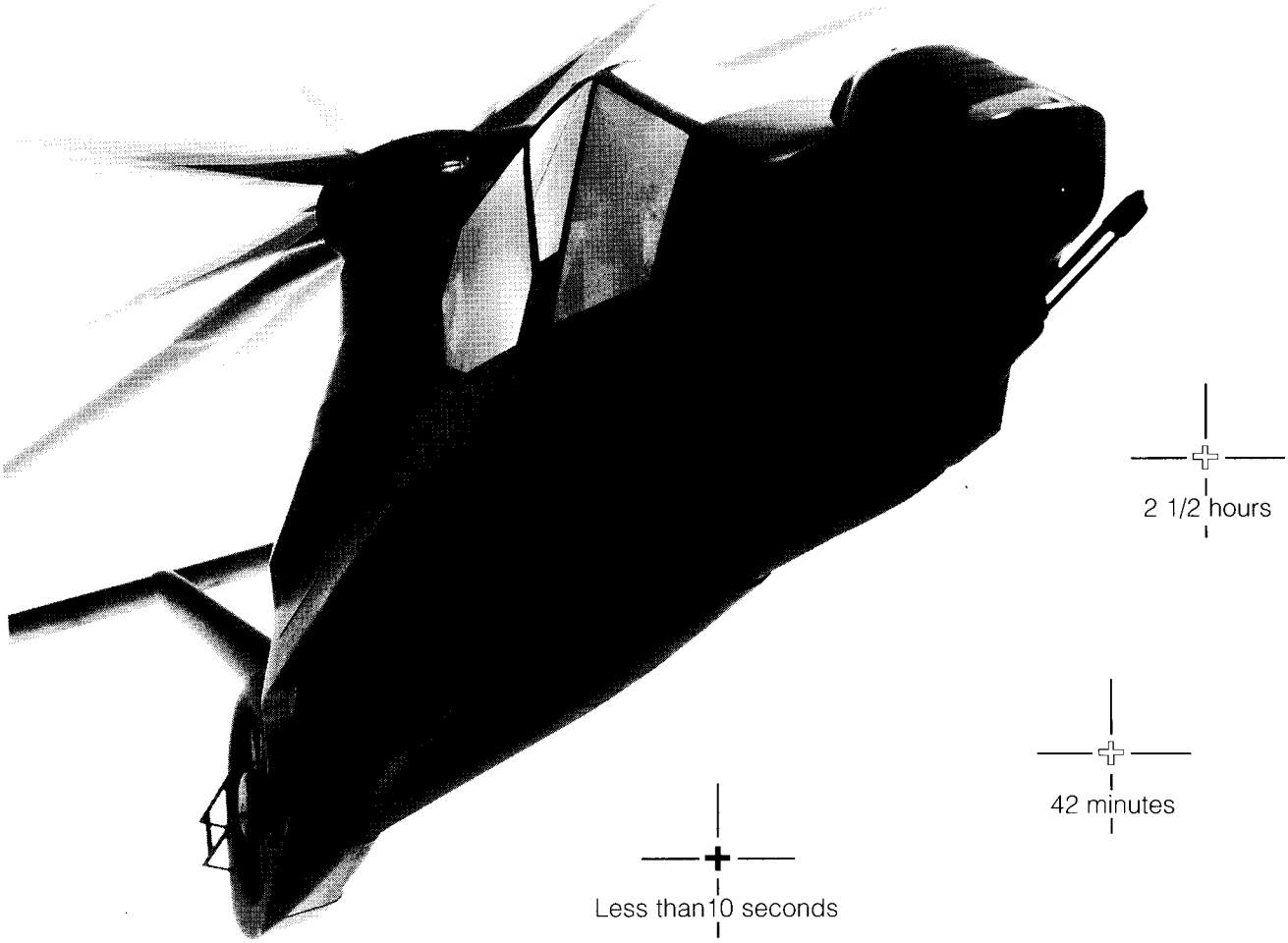

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